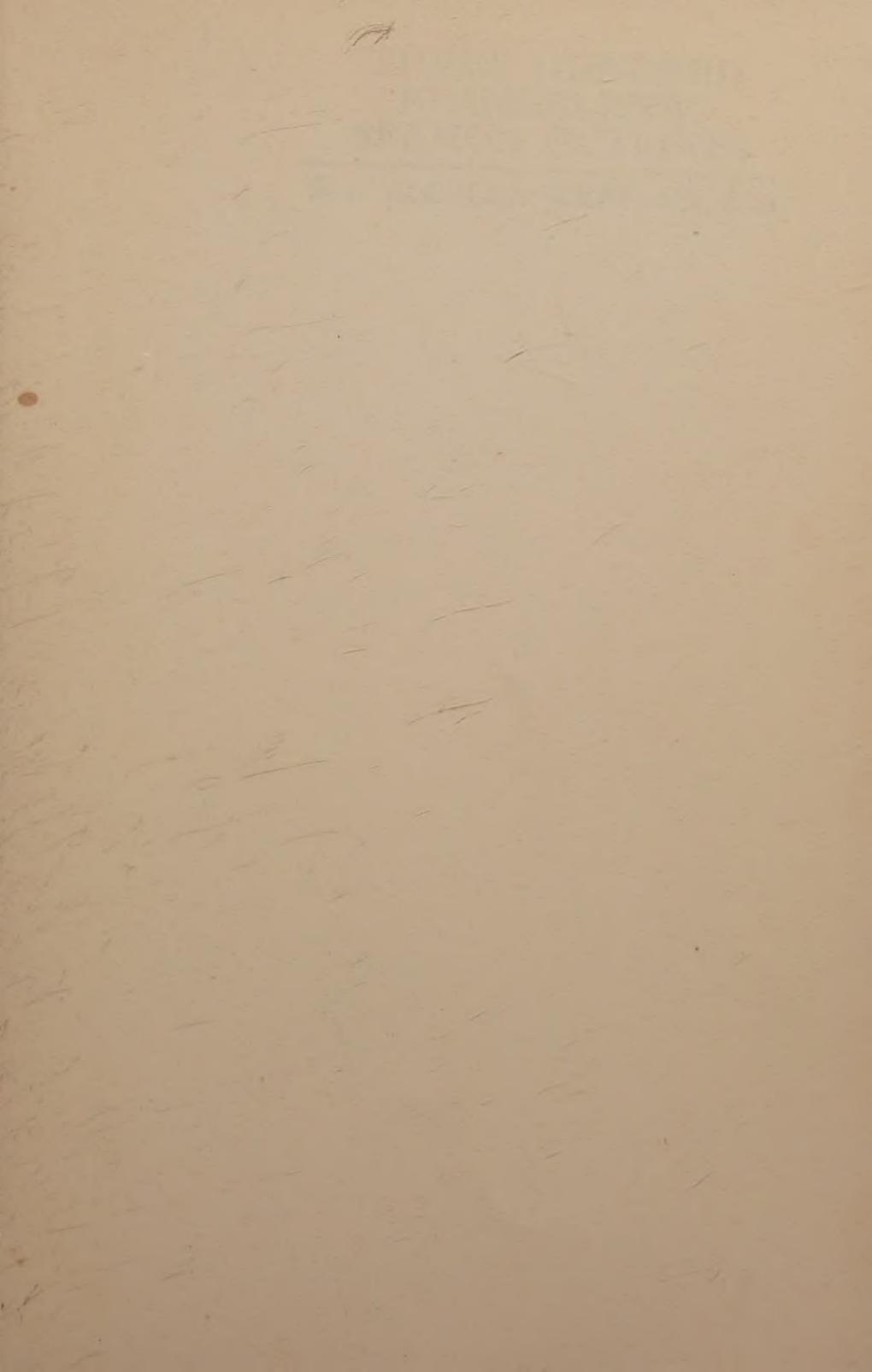


Rudolph Hoolin



THREE HUNDRED
EVANGELISTIC
SERMON OUTLINES

REV. AQUILLA WEBB, D.D., LL.D.

THREE HUNDRED EVANGELISTIC SERMON OUTLINES

BY

REV. AQUILLA WEBB, D.D., LL.D.

Author of "Cyclopedia of Sermon Outlines," "One Thousand Evangelistic Illustrations"

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

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STATED CLERK OF THE PRESBYTERIAN

GENERAL ASSEMBLY, U.S.A.



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TO THE
REV. FORD C. OTTMAN, D.D.
A TRUE SERVANT OF THE MOST HIGH GOD
AND A FAITHFUL EXPOSITOR OF HIS WORD
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

INTRODUCTION

The Evangelistic sermon is generally associated with emotionalism, as having more of feeling than of thought, as lacking in spiritual dignity and in intellectual vigour. Unfortunately many so-called Evangelistic sermons justify this impression.

In the selection of these three hundred outlines, Dr. Webb has done much to dissipate this impression. These outlines show that in an Evangelistic sermon spiritual fervour and intellectual integrity may be happily wedded, that passion for souls and humanistic understanding of life may be harmoniously united.

These outlines reveal the fact that the Evangelistic sermon must have a doctrinal basis before it can have an effective appeal. The great doctrines of salvation are basic to any Evangelistic result. Doctrinal preaching is or ought to be essentially Evangelistic preaching. But the doctrines must be presented on the level of man's understanding.

If the Evangelistic sermon deals with the doctrines of the being of God and His sovereignty, it must also clearly present the love of God and His loving kindness. If it emphasises the destroying power and the dire consequences of sin, it must also magnify the willingness and power of God to pardon sin and forgive the sinner. If it deals with men as great sinners, it must also show men that they have a great Saviour. The supreme need of the hour in all preaching is the wooing note.

Dr. Webb has done a great service in gathering together these outlines of Evangelistic sermons in that they show the happy blending of intellectual strength and human feeling, of theological fibre and spiritual force. The outlines grip the mind and satisfy the heart. They are built upon the eternal verities. They deal with principles, not precepts. They are on exalted themes and always practical. Strength and fibre and integrity are in all of these three hundred outlines.

They will be at once a guide to ministers in the selection of themes and an uplift to them in their own personal experiences.

Dr. Webb has rendered a notable service to ministers and to churches in the publication of these outlines.

L. S. M.

PREFACE

Revival is a word both popular and unpopular. Everything depends upon its content in the judgment of the one who uses it. There are Christian people who associate with the word irregularity in worship, extravagance in speech, excessive emotionalism and often fanaticism. On the other hand, there are Christians who are well aware that revivals are necessary phenomena in the orderly movement of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Well, what is a revival? Put in the simplest possible way, a revival means the quickening of life. It means a fuller, freer life on the part of those already possessing life who wish it in greater abundance.

A revival of trade begins with traders. A revival of politics begins with politicians. A revival of education begins with educators. A revival of games begins with pleasure seekers. A revival of religion, therefore, begins with religious people. A revival is not like a cloak that you can put on or take off at your pleasure. We may supply some of the conditions for a revival, but the revival itself is at the disposal of Him alone who is the author of life and its many manifestations.

If you will only recall instances of revival in the Old and New Testaments you will discover that they were unusual manifestations of power from on high. Study Elijah at Mt. Carmel, Josiah and Hezekiah in Judah, and Nehemiah in Jerusalem. Recall the apostles in the upper room, Philip in Samaria, and Paul and Barnabas in Antioch. Or, in more modern history, remember Calvin in Switzerland, Knox in Scotland, Luther in Germany, Wesley in England, and Jonathan Edwards in America. In every one of these instances there was a quickening of the graces of God's people when they became profoundly impressed with the necessity for a religious awakening and a forward movement on the strongholds of superstition and sin.

In all of God's movements for the salvation of the world His power is conditioned upon human co-operation. The children of Israel were to become God's peculiar treasure on the condition that they obeyed His voice and kept His covenant. Solomon inherited the power and prosperity of his father, but his prosperity was con-

ditioned upon his attempting to fulfil the statutes and judgments of the Lord. Isaiah assured Judah that they should eat of the good of the land if they were willing and obedient.

While God has not always found perfect instruments, He has always used the best available. He said to His imperfect disciples when He started them out on the world conquest: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And it has been true from that day to this that wherever His disciples were willing He has wonderfully manifested His power.

For Every Genuine Revival of Religion There Must Be Preparation Along the Line of Divine Instruction.

Revivals do not happen. They come after preparation, and the preparation required is not that upon which so many modern revivalists rely. They magnify organization under a competent committee, which secures the co-operation of many preachers and churches, puts up a tabernacle, gathers a great chorus choir, uses the press, and scatters millions of dodgers and advertisements. This may be the perfection of human wisdom for the gathering of a crowd and stirring the community. If we think any human way of doing is better than that laid down in the unerring Word of God, then that is the thing to do. And yet there are some still left on the earth who put the wisdom of God's method above the very shrewd plans of men.

Well, what is the Divine plan? We find it in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Humility. "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves." How utterly unlike the modern method! When some one asked the Latin father Augustine, "What is the first Christian virtue?" he replied, "Humility." And for the second and third requirement he gave the same answer: "Humility." When they asked him what the great God was doing now he replied: "He is casting down the proud and lifting up the humble."

The modern method of bringing about a revival is to take stock of our resources. We say, "How many pastors and churches are going into it? How much money can we raise for a tabernacle and for appropriate gifts to evangelists and singers?"

The old way in the Bible is just the reverse. There was indeed a taking of stock, but it was taken on the knees of a penitent people. The object was not to collect material riches, but to experience their spiritual poverty. "If my people shall humble themselves." Until

a man realises his extremity in the stupendous work of winning the world from its sins, he will never cry aloud with a breaking heart: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make it known."

Why is there so much modern day opposition to revivals? May it not be because God's professed followers are so concerned about the fruits and have so little concern for the roots of a revival? God does honour plans and men, but evangelists themselves will tell you that there is no work on earth so trying as the work of an evangelist, and for the very reason that God's people, and especially His ministers, are too often concerned more about their plans and praise than about the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Rev. Dr. E. Y. Mullins truly said that the most difficult thing in the world is to keep an eye on the recording angel and the public press at the same time.

Ah, truly, pride is a great obstacle to a genuine revival. We have too much church pride. We look upon our numbers, our wealth, our social position, our deeds of beneficence, and we say to ourselves: "Go to now, let us have a revival and be a little more so than we are now." All we have to do is to bring from a distance a magnetic personality with a national reputation and then back him up with our persons and purses.

How such consummate self-sufficiency must make the very angels weep! "Getting up a revival!" How this must grieve the Spirit of God! No, the revival of religion will never come that way. The sure way means, "Bend your backs, down on your knees, ay, fall flat on your faces and sob out the confession of sinful and senseless pride." Oh, when will we ever learn that it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Prayer. The next step in preparation for a revival of religion, the step that follows humility, is prayer. "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face."

One of our great modern preachers has written a book on prayer, and the title he gives the book is "The Lost Art." Truly it would seem that such is the case when we begin to look forward to a revival of religion. I do not have in mind the public prayers on the Lord's Day in our churches, but rather the secret, individual prayer on the part of men and women whose hearts are breaking on account of the wickedness of the world. Humility is good, but it must be followed by seeking God's face in prayer.

Would you know how holy men of old prevailed against the sins of people and nation? Look yonder at Abraham; when all had left

him he "stood yet before Jehovah" pleading, even as Jacob at the Jabbok. Hear Moses crying: "Oh, this my people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Hey, now if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Behold the Saviour himself looking on Jerusalem and sobbing out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

John Knox was the real evangelist when he was before the face of God, crying: "Give me Scotland or I die." Jonathan Edwards was truly the forerunner of the "Great Awakening" when he could neither eat nor sleep because of the sins of New England. George Whitefield's face shone like the face of Moses when he sobbed out: "Give me souls or take my soul."

Do we need any minister or evangelist to send us to our knees in these troubled times? Is not the wickedness of the world enough to take us to our knees night and day before God with strong crying and tears?

There Is a Third Step. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways."

Those of you who have passed through evangelistic campaigns will remember how a large part of the preaching is merciless criticism of the ministry and members of the churches. It is thought to be psychologically and theologically of prime importance to flagellate God's people before calling on the impenitent to turn to the Lord. In fact, the results of a revival are often measured by the number of inactive church members brought back into fellowship and co-operation. A canvass of large cities has revealed the fact that there are almost as many church members out of the church as in the church. They were once active, but in changing location they did not change their church letter, and were carried into the ways and sins of the world. To call them back into the fold would, in itself, be a marvellous thing.

It is not a pleasant thing for a minister to arraign those whom he loves, and yet if he would be a faithful and true witness he must ask his people: "Have we no wicked ways?" To question is to condemn. If we were to pass in review our home life, our church life, our business and social life, many heads would be bowed in shame. It is not necessary to go into details. But here is the issue: God brings no revival to any human heart that is not willing "to forsake its wicked ways."

Results Following God's Instruction for a Revival.

When we conform to conditions for a genuine revival of religion, God bestows the desired results. "Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Prayers Answered. "Then will I hear from heaven." Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance. Prayer is laying hold of God's willingness. Read Henry Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," and you will be persuaded that God does not work by chance. No child of God could be half so anxious as God Himself for the salvation of the lost, and yet He is dependent on His followers walking in His ways and keeping His commandments. We know with absolute certainty that the revival we need will come just as soon as God's people humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways.

Every great revival has been born in prayer. Remember the one hundred and twenty disciples praying in the upper room until there came the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In the revival that followed three thousand souls were added to the Church. And when the apostles were silenced a band of praying laymen went forth and five thousand more were added to the Church. In the great revival of 1857 in this country there were results that eternity alone will reveal. That revival started in a laymen's noonday prayer meeting.

Sins Forgiven. Not only will God "hear from heaven," but He will also "forgive their sin." It is not enough that we forsake our wicked ways. Forsaking wicked ways may be just the observance of rules. What we need is a right relation to the Ruler. In the fifty-first Psalm, we have the wail of David: "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." David had been "in wicked ways." He had sinned against himself, against Uriah, against Bath-sheba, against his family, against his people, and against his world. Yet all this was as nothing to the sin in his heart, which was the thing God hated. It was the sin in his heart that caused him to go "in wicked ways." There was no way by which he might observe rules and satisfy the Ruler. "Salvation by character" never entered his head. David did not rail against preachers or evangelists or religions. No! He was a sinner, and God only could forgive sin.

Isaiah emphasises this truth when he says: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song; He also is become my salvation."

Charles H. Spurgeon said: "The Lord would be better pleased to

have you ascribe creation to blind fate than the regeneration of a soul to human agency."

When there is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you may be sure of the presence of the Spirit of God. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Truly salvation is of the Lord. When we humble ourselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from our wicked ways, then God graciously and gladly says: "I will forgive your sin."

The Land Healed. "And will heal their land." Their land was sick. So is ours. There are a great many quack doctors in the world. The principal remedy they desire the sick land to take is "social salvation." In their eyes there should be more laws, better houses, cleaner streets, better homes for the incompetent, etc., etc. But they stop there. That is the be-all and end-all for a new heaven and a new earth. But whatever may be said about social salvation, which is salvation en masse, the fact remains that the religious unit is the individual. There is no salvation for families as families, societies as societies, or cities as cities. Salvation is for the individual. It means personal repentance. It means personal faith. It means personal regeneration. It means personal service, with humble reliance on the invisible but mighty power of God's Holy Spirit. The process may be slow, but only in this way is the "every one" to become the "all" of a redeemed and perfected humanity.

Indeed, our world is sick. There is great need for the healing hand. But let no one imagine that closing the red light district, eliminating the saloon, and locking up law violators, will heal the open sore. The hurt is deeper than the deed. Unless we change the heart of the people, all reformations would be but upon the surface, and the latter end would be worse than the first. Nehemiah was concerned to build the spiritual walls around Jerusalem in order that the material walls might remain.

God's word is very plain that personal healing must precede the healing of the land. "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land."

Revivals are a part of the Divine method in God's eternal purpose. We must believe in them. And we have a clear statement in Scripture that "some are called to be evangelists," and we must believe that some men are especially set apart from this work.

I have always wished that I might do the work of an evan-

gelist. But I am thankful that a minister need not give up his pulpit and travel from place to place to win souls for Christ. Some of the most successful soul winners I have ever known were men who never were evangelists, but they preached the old Gospel with passion and power, and then gave the people an opportunity to confess Christ.

I thank God for evangelists like Wesley and Whitefield, and Finney, and Moody, and Chapman, but I also thank God and take courage when I remember the humble preacher back in my old home town, who won me to an open confession of my Saviour in a revival that he conducted himself.

When I became a minister I was anxious to do for others what my pastor had done for me. This desire became a settled conviction by coming into intimate fellowship with that prince of evangelists, Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman.

The preparation of this book has therefore been a labour of love. That the outlines are largely doctrinal is not accidental but designed. Experience of all evangelists has proved that the most effective exhortation is based upon a proclaimed doctrine. As Prof. J. Gresham Machen says, "Christianity is not only a life, but also a doctrine, and logically the doctrine comes first."

AQUILLA WEBB.

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THREE HUNDRED EVANGELISTIC SERMON OUTLINES

PART I: OLD TESTAMENT

THREE HUNDRED EVANGELISTIC SERMON OUTLINES

Part I: Old Testament

GENESIS

God First.

"In the beginning God."—Genesis 1:1.

I. *The Devout Recognition of God Should Precede All Philosophy.* The God whom we worship is not a metaphysical idea; a form of thought; a philosophical abstraction; but a living, personal, eternal Being, apart from and prior to all human thought. He is not a creation of the intellect, but the intellect's Creator. We must begin with Him. Is not this one of the child's first thoughts, and one which life's long experience but deepens and confirms—that it was God who created all things? Does not the bare statement carry with it its own conviction? What need is there of proof? Who argues that there is a solid earth on which he stands; a sun shining in mid-day sky? Who constructs arguments to prove his own existence? And does not God stand at the beginning of all thought and all argument? And is not the denial of Him a sheer and wilful absurdity which no attempt at proof can make even plausible?

II. *The Devout Recognition of God Should Precede All Science.* The fact of His existence lies at the foundation of all physical science,

and must be admitted as its first and most essential fact. For what is science in general, or a science in particular, but the knowledge of facts—their qualities, relations, and causes—arranged and classified? But if science begins by refusing to admit, or by failing to perceive, the First Fact, and the Great Cause of all things? Does nothing exist but what the knife of the anatomist, or the tests of the chemist can detect? Matter and force do exist, or matter under some plastic power passing through innumerable changes. But what is it? And is this all? Are there no marks of intelligence?—purpose?—will? Is there no distinction of beauty?—of right and wrong? And what are these but marks of the ever-present God? Atheism explains nothing, and Pantheism nothing. No! Science cannot discover God. It is in the light of God's presence that science is best revealed. Science and philosophy alike presuppose Him.

III. *The Devout Recognition of God Precedes All Morality and Religion.* It lies at the basis of any sound ethical theory, and any true religious system of doctrine and practice. Religion, whether natural or revealed, is based on this fact. It is no more the part of religion than it is of philosophy and science to discover or

to demonstrate the existence of God, but to worship Him.—F. J. Falding.

The Soul and Its Capacities.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."—Genesis 2:7.

I. *First, Among the Properties of the Soul, Consider Its Capacity of Enjoyment and Its Capacity of Suffering.* I could appeal on this point to the experience of every one who has lived but a few years in this fallen world: few have done so who cannot bear inward witness of what the soul is capable of suffering. How acute is the sense of disappointed hope; how sad the anticipation of expected evil; how bitter the feeling of desire, long indulged, and still deferred, making the heart sick; how intense are the pangs of sorrow; how intolerable the agony of remorse! I will only remind you that God, who in His justice remembers mercy, seldom dispenses in this world unmixed suffering. To the wicked, even, there is commonly some hope of relief, which mitigates the sense of suffering; to the righteous there is always an alleviation. Think, then, what must be the weight of unmitigated suffering, aggravated by the assurance that it must endure for ever. In proportion to the capacity of suffering in the soul is also its capacity of enjoyment. We have some knowledge of this likewise. We can conceive the joy by which the heart of Jacob was elated when his sons "told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them; and when he saw the waggons." We can conceive the feelings of David when he found himself seated upon the throne of Israel, and the promise made unto his children after him, and the natural satisfaction

arising from greatness and prosperity was enhanced by the spiritual gratification of the consciousness of Divine favour. How intense again must have been the delight of the aged Simeon when the sight which he had been so long expecting was granted to him, and it was revealed to him that the child which his parents were now presenting in the temple was indeed the promised Saviour. But as in this preparatory world, sorrow comes attended with mitigation, so there is always some draw-back to our joy. Even if the joy itself were perfect, there is fear it would be short-lived; and He that gave may see fit to take away. There will be no such diminution of the eternal enjoyment prepared for the righteous in His heavenly kingdom: nothing to disturb the happiness of those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

II. *Consider Another Capacity of the Soul—Its Capacity of Goodness and of Wickedness.* I speak, you will observe, not of any goodness which it naturally has, but of that of which it is capable. The natural imagination of man's heart is evil, and that continually, since he fell from the innocence in which he was created. The soul, however, which was created in the image of God, and which has lost that likeness, is capable of having that image restored. It is capable of much which our reason tells us is good in itself, and which Scripture tells us is pleasing in the sight of God. How beautiful is the conduct of Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 13, when the land in which they were dwelling grew too strait for himself and his nephew Lot, and it became needful that they should separate. How admirable is the affection of Moses towards the Israelites, and the disinterestedness with which he entreats God to spare them. Look at the piety of Daniel, who, though he knew the writing was issued which should condemn him be-

fore an earthly tribunal, yet, "his window being opened in his chamber before Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and he prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Once more, admire the spirit of the martyr Stephen, who returned blessing for cursing, and kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The soul, then, is capable of goodness; the fruits of the Spirit may grow upon it, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. There is less need of proving that it is capable of wickedness; for "from within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adultery, murder, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemy; and these defile the soul"; they have defiled it ever since the time that Adam transgressed the command of God, and brought sin into the world. What envy, hatred, and malice were in the heart of Cain, when he rose up against his brother Abel and slew him; or of Esau who "hated Jacob, because of the blessing wherewith his father had blessed him"; "And Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." Look at the history of Pharaoh, one while entreating and repenting, and promising obedience, and then repenting of his repentance, and defying the power of God. Or take the case of Judas, daily hearing the word of righteousness—words such as never man spake, doctrines at which the people were astonished—yet not subdued, not converted, cherishing a secret sin, indulging covetousness, and appropriating to his own use what was designed for the poor.

III. Let Me Now Proceed to Remind You, in the Third Place, That Between This Wickedness and Misery, As Also Between Goodness and Happiness, God Has Appointed An Inseparable Connection. "The righteous shall go into life eternal; into

that world where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore"; and where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away; but the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." We do not stop to enter into the question of what is meant by this "second death"; whether it speaks of actual material fire, or whether the fire be figurative, it expresses the greatest imaginable misery. But this we know, that the unrestrained wickedness of the unrenewed heart leads on to misery in the way of natural consequence: it needs not the idea of material fire to form an addition to bodily anguish. The souls of the wicked, as well as of the good, are immortal; separated indeed, into their respective folds, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats, but still continuing immortal.—Bishop Sumner.

How Could God Justly Permit Satanic Temptation?

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—Genesis 3:1.

We see in this permission not injustice but benevolence.

I. Since Satan fell without external temptation, it is probable that man's trial would have been substantially the same, even though there had been no Satan to tempt him.

II. In this case, however, man's fall would perhaps have been without what now constitutes its single mitigating circumstance. Self-originated sin would have made man himself a Satan.

III. As, in the conflict with temptation, it is an advantage to objectify evil under the image of corruptible flesh, so it is an advantage to meet it as embodied in a personal and seducing spirit.

IV. Such temptation has in itself no tendency to lead the soul astray. If the soul be holy, temptation may only confirm it in virtue. Only the evil will, self-determined against God, can turn temptation into an occasion of ruin. As the sun's heat has no tendency to wither the plant rooted in deep and moist soil, but only causes it to send down its roots the deeper and to fasten itself the more strongly, so temptation has in itself no tendency to pervert the soul. The same temptation which occasions the ruin of the false disciple stimulates to sturdy growth the virtue of the true Christian. Contrast with the temptation of Adam the temptation of Christ. Adam had everything to plead for God, the garden and its delights, while Christ had everything to plead against Him, the wilderness and its privations. But Adam had confidence in Satan, while Christ had confidence in God, and the result was in the former case defeat, in the latter victory. How could a penalty so great be justly connected with disobedience to so slight a command. To this question we may reply: 1. So slight a command presented the best test of the spirit of obedience. 2. The external command was not arbitrary or insignificant in its substance. It was a concrete presentation to the human will of God's claim to eminent domain or absolute ownership. 3. The sanction attached to the command shows that man was not left ignorant of its meaning or importance. 4. The act of disobedience was therefore the revelation of a will thoroughly corrupted and alienated from God—a will given over to ingratitude, unbelief, ambition and rebellion. The motive to disobedience was not appetite, but the

ambition to be as God. The outward act of eating the forbidden fruit was only the thin edge of the wedge, behind which lay the whole mass—the fundamental determination to isolate self and to seek personal pleasure regardless of God and His law. So the man under conviction for sin commonly clings to some single passion or plan, only half-conscious of the fact that opposition to God in one thing is opposition in all.—A. H. Strong.

Satan's Wiles.

"And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said?"—Genesis 3:1.

The first words which Satan is ever recorded to have spoken must be words of interest, if it be only that they may serve as a key to unlock some of his later subtleties. And I observe at once a remarkable similarity between all the beginnings of Satan's words. I hear him coming to the first Adam—"Yea, hath God said?" then I listen to him approaching the second Adam—"If thou be the Son of God." And there is one feature characterising both. He begins with laying a doubt at the root. He questions; he unsettles. He does not assert error: he does not contradict truth; but he confounds both. He sets the mind at cavilling. He leaves a worm to gnaw at the core; and then he goes his way. Just so I observe his dealing when he speaks to God about Job. He opens his mouth with a question—"Does Job fear God for nought?"

So I at once take this general inference—that Satan makes his first entries, not by violent attack, but by secret sapping, and that he endeavours to confuse and cloud the mind which he is afterwards going to kill in the dark.

I. *Take the Experience of a Be-*

iever, and take the facts recorded in Satan's history, and it is evident in the outset that these questionings of the mind are always to be taken as Satan's temptations. The history of Paradise will be sufficient to show this. The more you can resist these doubts as temptations, and bring to bear upon them your defensive armour, as you do in any moral temptation, and especially the more you throw them off as not your own, and give them back again, the sooner will be the victory and the sooner the trial will pass away.

II. With All Satan's Views, His Far End Is to Diminish from the Glory of God. You are wrong if you think his far end is to destroy your soul; you are wrong if you think his far end is to destroy the universe of souls. He takes these but as a means to his highest ambitious end: his final object is to derogate something from the Majesty of God. Against God is his spleen directed; therefore, to mar God's design, he insinuated his wily coil into the garden of Eden; to mar God's design, he met Jesus Christ in the wilderness, on the mountain top, and on the pinnacle of the temple; to mar God's design, he is always leading us to take unworthy views of God's nature and God's work.

III. It Is Satan's Delight to Make Limitations—draw boundary lines around grace. There is not a beautiful doctrine, but he will try to diminish it, and draw out of it, if he can, a proof of a limited gospel. He is always saying—"It is not for everybody, it is not for all persons, but it is for 'the elect.' " "It is not in everything; it does not go down into little particulars." And so he tries to make the very mind of the child of God, which ought to be standing out in perfect liberty, wherein Christ hath made it free, to be bound in the prison house. He detracts from the largeness of God's

love; he will not hold the grandeur of universal love; he will not hold particular election; he hates both—because both glorify God. Particular election, showing particular love, universal redemption, the vastness of his compassion: therefore both he would put away. Satan is always disparaging or impugning universal redemption or individual election.

IV. For All These Confining, Limiting Views There Is But One Remedy—it is to look at the character of God, as He is revealed in the covenant of His grace. You will observe that this is exactly what our Saviour did. When He was tempted, He threw Himself and Satan back upon "what is written." —Dean Vaughan.

The Fall.

"*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*"—Genesis 3: 13.

I. Temptation Comes Like a Serpent; like the most subtle beast of the field; like that one creature which is said to exert a fascinating influence on its victims, fastening them with its glittering eye, stealing upon them by its noiseless, low and unseen approach, perplexing them by its wide circling folds, seeming to come upon them from all sides at once, and armed not like the other beasts with one weapon of offence—horn or hoof, or teeth—but capable of crushing its victim with every part of its sinuous length. It lies apparently dead for months together, but when roused it can, as the naturalist tells us, "out-climb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the zebra, outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger."

II. Temptation Succeeds at First by Exciting Our Curiosity. It is a wise saying that "our great security against sin lies in being shocked at it. Eve gazed and reflected when she should have fled." The serpent cre-

ated an interest, excited her curiosity about this forbidden fruit. And as this excited curiosity lies near the beginning of sin in the race, so does it in the individual. I suppose if you trace back the mystery of iniquity in your own life and seek to track it to its source, you will find it to have originated in this craving to taste evil. No man originally meant to become the sinner he has become. He only intended, like Eve, to taste. It was a voyage of discovery he meant to make; he did not think to get nipped and frozen up and never more return from the outer cold and darkness. He wished before finally giving himself to virtue to see the real value of the other alternative.

III. Through This Craving for an Enlarged Experience Unbelief in God's Goodness Finds Entrance. In the presence of forbidden pleasure we are tempted to feel as if God were grudging us enjoyment. The very arguments of the serpent occur to our mind. No harm will come of our indulging; the prohibition is needless, unreasonable, and unkind; it is not based on any genuine desire for our welfare.

IV. If We Know Our Own History We Cannot Be Surprised to Read That One Taste of Evil Ruined Our First Parents. It is so always. The one taste alters our attitude towards God and conscience and life. It is a veritable Circe's cup.

V. The First Result of Sin Is Shame. The form in which the knowledge of good and evil comes to us is the knowing we are naked, the consciousness that we are stripped of all that made us walk unabashed before God and men. The promise of the serpent while broken in the sense is fulfilled to the ear; the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Self-reflection begins, and the first movement of conscience produces shame.

VI. But When Adam Found He Was No Longer Fit for God's Eye, God Provided a Covering Which Might Enable Him Again to Live in His Presence Without Dismay. Man had exhausted his own ingenuity and resources and exhausted them without finding relief to his shame. If his shame was to be effectually removed, God must do it. It is also to be remarked that the clothing which God provided was in itself different from what man had thought of. Adam took leaves from an inanimate, unfeeling tree; God deprived an animal of life, that the shame of His creature might be relieved. This was the last thing Adam would have thought of doing. To us life is cheap and death familiar, but Adam recognised death as the punishment of sin. Death was to early man a sign of God's anger. And he had to learn that sin could be covered not by a bunch of leaves snatched from a bush as he passed by and that would grow again next year, but only by pain and blood. Sin cannot be atoned for by any mechanical action, nor without expenditure of feeling. Suffering must ever follow wrongdoing. From the first sin to the last, the track of the sinner is marked with blood.—M. Dods.

Satan in History.

"*And the Lord God said . . .*"—Genesis 11:18.

"*And the serpent said . . .*"—Genesis 3:4.

And between these two voices the education and discipline of man have been conducted from the first day until now. Never let us shut our eyes to facts. There is a temptation to avoid unpleasant subjects; such temptation is one of the devil's tricks.

I. "*And the Lord God said . . .*" "*And the serpent said . . .*" and they

both spoke practically on the first page of the first book in the Bible; the devil was nearly as instantaneously present as was God. "And God said . . ." "And the serpent said . . ." and sometimes they are blended and interblended, and you can hardly discriminate between one tone and the other.

If I look abroad upon the earth so far as it is accessible to my observation, I cannot but find proofs enough that there is an enemy, call him by what name you please, account for him as you like, deny him if you will; I cannot account for certain broad facts, events, collisions, tragedies, woes, losses, apart from the suggestion that there is an unslumbering enemy; I cannot trace everything to a good parent. I am not able yet to say that all things are pure, sweet, beneficent, healing and full of blessedness. On the contrary, I can say, There is an enemy here, or there, or yonder; God never dug a grave, God never inflicted pain; there must be behind all the pain which He inflicts a reason or a suggestion which refers to some other and alien and antagonistic and most cruel force.

II. It is wonderful how the Bible from beginning to end, from almost the first page to the last, broadly, definitely, recognises the personality and ministry of an evil one. The slime of the serpent is upon every page, his fang thrusts itself through all the rose leaves and summer beauty of life and time.

Until we get back to fundamental facts we cannot preach the Gospel; in fact, we shall have no Gospel to preach. It was not until "the serpent said" that another voice replied, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." The serpent speech is the first page, the first sentence, in the Christian theology.

III. Now as visibly in the one case as in the other there is certainly a good spirit abroad, a holy redeeming

spirit, a gentle, tender, sympathising spirit, a benign power that will not leave us until the red wound has been skinned over and until that skin has grown into a sufficient and permanent security. The Bible does not create God; I see God in providence, I see Him in my own life, I see Him in the family life of all my friends; He wants time for the development of His personality and the full revelation of His design and the complete outlining and outsphering of His beneficent purpose.

1. Remember that the power of the serpent is limited. He is chained, he cannot add one link to his chain, he cannot stretch it; it is not an elastic chain, it is inflexible.

2. And the ministry of the evil one is educational if properly received. It teaches us what we are, what we may become, it teaches us our need of redeeming love, it teaches us the vanity of love, the transitoriness of the things upon which we lavish our affection.

3. And the power of the devil is revelatory. It will help us to understand the larger and fuller side of things; it will help us to account for some things which otherwise would distress our faith. Satan can only do a certain amount of mischief; the amount of mischief shall return upon his own head; and one day, far off, we shall see how it was that without knowing it the enemy was one of our friends.—Joseph Parker.

Why the Wicked Are Spared for a Season.

"For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."—Genesis 15:16.

I. This passage, taken in connection with its attending circumstances, teaches us the following important truths: *God Waits Until Sinners Have Filled Up a Certain Measure of*

Iniquity, Before He Executes the Sentence by Which They Are Doomed to Destruction; but when this measure is full, execution certainly and immediately follows. 1. That God is under no obligation to suspend the destruction of sinners until the measure of their iniquity is full, or even to suspend it for a single hour. The life of every sinner is already forfeited. 2. Then when we say God waits until sinners have filled up a certain measure of iniquity before He destroys them, we do not mean that He waits upon all till they have filled up the same measure. In other words, we do not mean that all sinners are equal in sinfulness and guilt at the hour of their death. To assert this would be contrary to fact and daily observation. 3. That every impenitent sinner's iniquity is constantly filling up; it falls much more rapidly in some cases, and at some seasons, than at others.

II. To Prove the Assertion, Which Was Drawn from Our Text.—1. The truth of this assertion may be proved from other passages of Scripture. St. Paul informs us that the conduct of the Jews tended to fill up their sins alway; for, he adds, wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. By the mouth of the prophet Joel God says, Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe, for their wickedness is great. And, using the same figure, St. John informs us that he saw an angel seated on a cloud, having in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple of God, and said to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. The same truths appear to be taught by the parable of the barren fig-tree. 2. The truth of the remark under

consideration is further proved by the history of God's dealings with sinful nations and individuals.

III. To Make Some Improvement of the Subject.—1. From this subject you may learn, my impenitent hearers, why God spares sinners long after their lives are forfeited, and why He spares you. It is because the measure of your iniquity is not yet full. 2. From this subject, my hearers, you may learn the indispensable necessity of an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are constantly adding to your sins, to diminish them is beyond your power. Yet you must cease to commit new sins, and those which you already have committed must be blotted out, or you will perish forever. Christ alone can enable you to do either. His blood cleanses from all sin; He is able to cast all your iniquities into the depths of the sea; and He can renovate your hearts, and render you holy, so that you shall no longer treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. 3. There is an important sense in which many of the preceding remarks are applicable to Christians. Those of you who have been such for any considerable time, have often, when contemplating your sins, and especially when in a religious declension, been ready to conclude that God would visit you with some severe temporal affliction, as a mark of His displeasure. But instead of this, you have found Him returning to you in mercy, healing your backslidings, and putting the song of salvation into your mouths. Having often found this to be the case, you may begin to conclude that it will always be so, and thus you may be insensibly led to become careless and slothful, to think lightly of sin, and not to guard against the first symptoms of declension. But if so, God will, in a terrible manner, convince you of your mistake, and make you to know experimentally that it is an evil and bitter thing to forsake Him.—E. Payson.

Church Fellowship.

"Come in, thou blessed of the Lord."
—Genesis 24:31.

As Laban said, "I have prepared the house," so Christ has ordained the Church and provided it with all things necessary for the refreshment, repose and invigoration of His people. As Abraham's servant was invited to enter, so the ministers and stewards of God's Word, and all the members of His Church should bless those whom the Lord has blessed, and affectionately invite them to participate in all the privileges of the Lord's house.

I. *Who Are the "Blessed of the Lord"?* The Lord Jesus answered our question in the very first sentences of His great sermon on the mount. "He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'" The Lord also said, "Blessed are they that mourn." The Lord also said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." These are "blessed of the Lord."

II. *Let Us Inquire Why Those Who Are "Blessed of the Lord" Should Accept the Invitation of the Church to "Come In," by Personal Confession of Christ.*

1. The Lord commands it (Matt. 10:32, 33; Mark 8:38).

2. The Church solicits it. A Christian who never confesses Christ and who holds aloof from fellowship with the Church, might as well not exist, so far as the interests of the Church are concerned.

3. The world needs it. The stronger the Church the more potent is the influence at work for the world's good.

4. Your own spiritual welfare requires it. The value of association is recognised in other things. And thus church fellowship is useful in strengthening the convictions of those who share in a common faith and

love towards Christ. An additional safeguard is thus furnished in seasons of temptation.

III. *Let Us Now Examine Some of the Excuses Adduced by Those Who, Though "Blessed of the Lord," Yet "Stand Without."* Some are ashamed of Christ and shrink from the ridicule or enmity which confession might bring upon them. But these are not "blessed of the Lord," for He says to them: "He that is ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed." Some keep outside that they may be free from the restraints of membership, and have more liberty for sin, or at least for folly. Others keep outside because they resolve to postpone repentance. But why do any who really trust in Jesus and who desire to love and obey Him "stand without"? They are hindered by unscriptural obstacles, erroneous opinions or misapplied humility.—Newman Hall.

Tithes at the Start.

"Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."
—Genesis 28:22.

The two important matters of notice, in this text, are the early purpose of this young patriarch to give a portion of his wealth to religious ends, and the establishment of a fixed system in presenting it. It seems to be in Scripture history the exact beginning of all that custom of tithing the people which meets us everywhere in the Old Testament. It has arrested my attention, because it is the act of a young man just starting in the new life. It furnishes me with this for a topic—Systematic beneficence: its principle and its measure.

I. *The Principle May Be Stated in One Compact Sentence:* A Christian is to contribute, not on impulse, but by plan. Jacob seems to have

understood in the outset that this was to be the practical side of his life.

1. This duty should be taken up early by every young Christian as a matter of study.

2. It will not do to discharge this work all at once. A settled habit of giving is promoted only by a settled exercise of giving.

3. It will not do to leave this duty to a mere impulse of excitement. Christians ought never to wait for fervid appeals or ardent addresses to sympathy.

4. It will not do to perform this duty as a mere mechanical form. We are told, in one familiar verse of the New Testament, that "he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." This singular word "sparingly" occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It means grievingly, regretfully; holding back after the gift, if such an expression may be allowed.

5. This duty is to be discharged only with a diligent comparison of means with ends. System in giving is the secret of all success.

II. The measure of Christian beneficence.

1. Give tithes to start with.

2. Tithes, just to start with, will in many cases force a Christian on

to increase as he grows in fortune. When life grows easier, and gains more plentiful, the good Lord, whose stewards we are, raises His rates of loan, and expects more liberal returns.

III. Considerations Which Enter into the Reckoning.

1. Think of what has been done in our behalf by God, our Maker and Redeemer. We should measure our gifts in money by our receipts in grace.

2. Remember whence the prosperity came, out of which we give money. God seeks where He has given.

3. Consider the extent of the work which is to be accomplished.

4. Think of the promises which reward the free-giver. "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

5. Think of the exigencies arising under the favouring providences of God.

6. Think of the listlessness of others.

Conclusion: He who gives tithes at the start will grow himself as his fortune grows. He that delays will harden. And it should never be forgotten that money is only the measure of manhood when consecrated to Christ. It is ourselves we give to Him, ourselves He demands.—C. S. Robinson.

EXODUS

The Bondage of Sin.

"They made their lives bitter with hard bondage."—Exodus 1:14.

I. The Bondage as an Illustration of Sin.—"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." 1. The unnaturalness of this bondage. Men were fitted to serve God, not Satan. All their powers are perverted, misused, and reversed, when they are in courses

of disobedience and rebellion. "Right" means "straight," and "wrong" means "wrung." 2. The severity of this bondage. No taskmaster for men has ever been found more brutal than a brutal man. The devil has no despot out of hell more despotic than sinners to place over sinners. When villains get villains in their power, how they do persist in lashing them into further villainy and vice! 3. The injustice of this bondage. Satan never

remembers favours bestowed. One may give himself, body, soul, and spirit to the devil, and no fidelity will win him the least consideration. Injustice is the rule in sin; it never in any case has exceptions. The prince of evil simply uses his devotees all the worse because of their servility and patience. 4. The destructiveness of this bondage of sin. The wanton waste of all that makes life worth a struggle by persistent courses of sin is familiar to every thoughtful observer. Wickedness never builds up; it always pulls down. Once in the heat of a public discussion some infidels challenged an immediate reply to what they called their arguments. A plain woman arose in the audience; she proceeded to relate how her husband had been dissipated and unkind; she had prayed for him, and he had become a praying man and a good father; years of comfort and of peace had they now dwelt together in the love of each other and the fear of God. "So much," she continued, "has my religion done for me. Will you kindly state now what your religion has done for you in the same time?" Done? Unbelief does not do anything, it undoes.

II. And now with so sorrowful a showing as this bondage has to make, it seems surprising to find that the Israelites were counselled to "remember" it. *Why Should They Recall Such Humiliation?* 1. Such reminiscences promote humility. Spiritual pride is as dangerous as a vice. What have we that God's mercy has not bestowed upon us? Why boast we over each other? Recollect that "the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day." To Him we owe everything we are. 2. Such a remembrance quickens our considerate charity for others. Our disposition is to condemn and denounce the degeneracies of the times in which

we live. Wherein are people worse now than we ourselves were once? How do we know what we might have been if it had not been for the arrest of our rebellion by the power of the Holy Ghost? Once, as a drunken man reeled past his door, John Newton exclaimed: "But for the grace of God, there goes John Newton!"—C. S. Robinson.

Hardening.

"I will harden his heart."—Exodus 4: 21.

God communicates anew with Moses, fortifying his resolution to appear before Pharaoh, putting words into his mouth, and warning him of the effect his message would produce. He was not to fail to do all his wonders before Pharaoh, though the only effect would be to harden the monarch's heart—to confirm him in his resolution not to let the people go.

I. *The Word of God Is To Be Addressed to Men*, Whatever Reception It May Meet With.—It is to be set forth, and the evidence which attests it exhibited, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek. 2: 5); and this—1. That God's will may be made known. 2. That men's dispositions may be tested. 3. That if men disobey they may be left without excuse. 4. That ulterior purposes may be fulfilled. For men's unbelief cannot make the faith of God without effect (Rom. 3: 3). If men disbelieve and are hardened, God will use even their hardening as the point of attachment for some new link in the chain of His providential developments.

II. *God Infallibly Foreknows the Effect of Every Appeal or Message He Addresses to His Moral Creatures*.—He knows those to whom His servants will be "the savour of death unto death," and those to whom they

will be "the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). But the knowledge that His Word will be rejected is not a reason for keeping it back. As respects these foreknown effects, we are not permitted to say either—1. That God wills (i.e., desires) that His Word should harden; or 2. That in any case it hardens by His *arbitrarily* withholding the grace which would have produced an opposite result. Yet Divine sovereignty is not to be denied in the effects produced by the preaching of the Word, or in God's dealings with men in mercy and judgment generally. He will be a bold student of Divine things who ventures to assert that by *no* means known to him could God have subdued the obstinacy even of a Pharaoh. Hearts as stubborn have yielded before now. We cannot solve these anomalies. Enough for us to know that God's sovereignty, however exercised, is ever righteous, holy, and, could we see all, loving.

III. God's Word, When Its Message Is Resisted, Hardens the Heart That Resists It.—The hardening of the heart it here attributed to God, as in other places it is attributed to Pharaoh himself. The latter statement occasions no difficulty. It is the invariable law, and one which is constantly being exemplified, that he who resists grace and truth incurs the penalty of being hardened. That result follows from the constitution of the moral nature. But precisely in this fact lies the explanation of the other mode of statement, that the hardening of the heart is from God. For God is concerned in the results which flow from the operation of His own laws, and takes (providentially) the responsibility of them. We may go even further, and say that God designs that those who resist His truth shall be hardened by it; just as He designs that those who believe and obey it shall be saved. And the stronger way of putting the matter,

harsh as it seems, has its own advantages. Resisters of truth do well to remember that in their attitude of opposition they have to do, not merely with "laws," reacting to darken the mind and indurate the heart, but with a living God within and behind these laws, lending His solemn sanction to their operations, willing the results which flow from them, and righteously punishing sin by means of them. This explanation, indeed, is not complete. Other phases of the subject come into view later. Meanwhile the preacher of the Gospel is not to be astonished that his word, in many cases, produces hardening effects. This is foreseen by God, and is taken up into His plan. Learn also how a career of iniquity is often punished by the transgressor being brought into circumstances which, merciful in their own operation, yet lead to his greater hardening.—J. Orr.

We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight.

"And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground."—Exodus 14:22.

The great mistake of most people is that they trust too much to their own eyes. They will not take into consideration anything that lies beyond the field of sensible experiences. Now God and His eternity, though manifested in this field, are practically outside it; the spiritual eyesight is more reliable than the physical, because that which it sees is safer to rely upon. Natural sight shows us obstacles, spiritual sight shows us how they may be surmounted. Try to walk by the one and you must stand still; try to walk by the other and nothing can long keep you standing. Notice here:—

I. Faith's Secret.—The story illustrates this; it shows us:—1. *What the Israelites saw.* Their position

looked bad enough. Behind were the hosts of Pharaoh; before, the sea. They were shut in. Trusting only to their eyes they could hardly do other than despair (Exod. 14: 10-13). Better to have been "let alone" in Egypt than thus delivered, to be destroyed in the wilderness. A clear head, if the heart be faint, is not much help to any man.

2. What Moses saw. He was in the same position as the people whom he led, yet he could see more than they did. He looked not merely before and behind, he looked also up to God. Faith enabled him to ignore sight, and inspired him to encourage his sight-fascinated followers. Soon the word came which justified his faith, obstacles were nothing, let them wait the word of command and then "go forward." Often difficulties seem to surround us—no way of escape anywhere visible. Even so, faith can sight the way, for faith can sight God who sees it. Stand still, wait His words, refuse to allow that for those who trust Him any difficulties can be insurmountable. Faith would not be of much good were there no obstacles to test it. Faith is not of much good if it cannot learn to ignore obstacles.

II. Faith's Success.—The path of faith not merely leads out of danger, it turns dangers into safeguards and transforms them into a protection for those who tread it. When the word came "Go forward," the waters no longer "shut in" the Israelites; instead:—1. They protected them during their passage. The Egyptians could but follow, they could not circumvent. "The waters were a wall unto them" on either side; no wall could have been more impregnable. 2. They secured them against the fury of their pursuers. Israel once across, the waters returned, overwhelming the armies of the enemy. So too faith, facing the flood, found that waters which drowned the world upheld the

ark and floated it in safety. So too faith, facing the waters of death, finds that though they overwhelm the unready they float the faithful into a safe harbour. So too with all difficulties, faced in faith, they are our best helpers. "The hand of the diligent" not only "maketh rich," it cleaves a way for him through the sea of difficulty, and leaves his pursuers, sloth, ignorance, all the deadly sins, overwhelmed and swallowed up behind him.

III. Faith's Strength.—How comes faith to do all this? It is not faith that does it, but the God in whom faith trusts. Nothing is impossible to faith, because nothing is impossible to God. The Egyptians are sure of their prey; the Israelites are sure of destruction; because, whilst reckoning with what sight sees, they fail to reckon with the unseen God. Moses is sure of safety because he is sure of God, and knows that He is more than a match for all the seeming tyranny of circumstances.

Application. How many people are shut in, faithless and discouraged before some sea of difficulty! "I cannot do this," "I cannot do that," and yet no progress is possible until I not merely *can* but *do*. "O ye of little faith, wherefore will ye doubt!" "I cannot"; no, but *God* can; and what He bids you do that He will strengthen you to do. Don't stand facing the difficulties, but face the God who is above them and beyond them. "Stand still and wait" until the word comes, but when the word does come, "Go forward" (2 Cor. 12: 9-10).—C. A. Goodhart.

Co-operation.

"The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."—Exodus 18: 19.

Men may make a channel for the

stream, but they cannot make the stream. Water-power is a grand natural agency; but it is by means of human agency that it may be applied to the best advantage. So also in other matters power comes from God; the way to use and economise power it is left for man to discover and to act upon. Consider here:—

I. The Divine Power. "God shall be with thee," said Jethro. The history shows how God had been with him already, how he was with him all through his life. Especially we may notice—

1. His relation to Pharaoh. The shepherd facing the king. Whence his boldness? He had shrunk before-hand at the mere prospect; when the hour came Pharaoh quailed before him. It was not Moses, it was the power which manifested itself through Moses that humbled Pharaoh. Moses was but the visible rod in the outstretched hand of the invisible Jehovah.

2. His relation to the people. Harder to face a fickle multitude than to face an obstinate and powerful monarch. Here too the Divine power was manifested; the glory of Jehovah was, as it were, reflected from the face of his servant. It was the radiancy of the reflected glory which again and again cowed the rebels to submission. As with Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-8), Zerubbabel (Zed. 4:6), St. Paul (2 Cor. 12:9, 10), so also with Moses; human weakness the more evidently testified to Divine power.

II. The Human Counsel. Notice:—

1. The need of it. Men are so weak that they are soon unhinged by a great trust reposed in them. Their attention is so fixed upon the one thing, that other things are seen out of perspective. Moses was so filled with the consciousness of a Divine power working through him that he failed at first to realise the fact that he was unequal to the friction neces-

sitated by such a power. He realised the effect of the power in prospect more accurately than he could do after it possessed him (cf. ch. 4). As the mediator between God and Israel, had it not been for Jethro's counsel, he must soon have been worn out through forgetting the necessities of his own nature. Lives are still wasted and shortened through a like oversight. The man who feels that he is the channel of Divine power is, for the time, so God-intoxicated that it does not occur to him to share his responsibilities. He must be both head and hands in everything, and the head in consequence soon grows heavy, and the hands hang down. Under the force of inspiration, common-sense is in abeyance; all the more need for wise counsel from those who occupy a neutral standpoint.

2. The wisdom of it. Jethro saw that the great thing was not that Moses should do all the work, but that all the work should be done. The power to do it was no doubt lodged with Moses (cf. water-power lodged with keeper of sluice gates). The work, however, might be best done by a distribution of the power through selected agents. Moses need not to be head and hands; he might choose other hands, making them responsible to himself as head. Moses showed his wisdom by accepting the wise counsels of Jethro; many men would have shown their folly by setting them aside as the suggestions of ignorance.

Concluding Considerations. Inspiration is a grand thing; but it may be best utilised by common-sense. God's power enables for action; but that power is best applied when the counsels of Jethro are attended to. All men have not the same gifts; and those who have what seem to be the higher gifts are apt to set too small a value upon advice given by those less gifted. Even the gift of faith, however, needs the gift of wisdom

to direct it. Moses was able to do more than he otherwise could have done because he was wise enough to hearken to the voice of Jethro, his father-in-law.—C. A. Goodhart.

The Mercy-Seat.

"And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold."—Exodus 25:17.

Our mercy-seat, our reconciliation-residence in Jesus, the Divine Saviour, the God-man mediator. And all the typical teachings of this branch of our subject may be drawn out in the attempt to answer one question, viz.: What sort of a mercy-seat have we in Christ?

I. *In Replying to This Inquiry, I Desire to Show That We Have in Christ, in the First Place, an Authorised Mercy-seat.* He who occupies this mercy-seat is "a just God and a Saviour." No violence is done to any principle of honour, or of justice in the government of the universe by the dispensing of grace from this mercy-seat. The Divine law is magnified and made honourable. Every attribute of the Divine character is vindicated.

II. *But I Observe Secondly of the Mercy-seat Which We are Bidden to Approach in Christ That It Is an Encouraging Mercy-seat.* Christ, in the glory of His finished righteousness, is the medium through which God looks at all His believing children. He sees them only "in the face of His anointed." Hence it is said of believers in Christ that "they are righteous" in God's sight, "even as He," i.e., Christ, "is righteous."

III. *But Thirdly I Observe Respecting This Mercy-seat That It Is Full of Privilege for the Present.* Suppose you were travelling in a foreign land. You are cut off from intercourse with all whom you most love on earth. There is only one

channel through which you can hear from home, and obtain the supply of all that is necessary to meet your daily wants. How precious that channel of communication would be to you! How you would prize it! How anxious and careful you would be to keep it open! The thought of having it interrupted, or cut off, would be insupportable to you. Yet this is but a faint image of the Christian's position here in the world and of the relation of the mercy-seat to Him.

IV. *There Is Only One Other Point of View from Which We May Glance at the Mercy-seat,* and thus contemplated it shines before us as bright with hope for the future. Hitherto it has always been true of Jehovah that, "verily he is a God that hideth himself." But the time cometh, when of all that pertains to the character and work of God, it may be said, "There hath been nothing hid that will not be made manifest." "What we know not now we shall know hereafter." The true Shekinah upon the mercy-seat will have no single dark point connected with it. Over all its outspread surface the cloud will be lighted up with the splendours of Divinity. You have often seen a mass of clouds in the western sky, unillumined by the sun's rays, as the day was drawing to a close. You know how dark and unattractive that mass appeared. But presently you see the sun pass behind it, and what a wondrous transformation is wrought in its appearance! How radiant the whole mass becomes! How every point in it glows and sparkles with the splendours of the sun that shines through it! So will it be with the cloud upon our mercy-seat. When Jesus was on earth the coarse garments of humanity were upon Him. Then the Shekinah cloud was dark. But the redeemed shall look upon that cloud again amidst the glory of the heavenly kingdom. Then all darkness

will have passed away. The sun of uncreated Deity will be pouring all its brightness through it.—R. Newton.

Holiness to the Lord.

"Holiness to the Lord."—Exodus 28: 36.

This plate of pure gold was fastened by blue lace to the mitre, or turban, or tiara, of linen, which was upon the head of the high priest. He put it on with the robe of the ephod, the robe under the breastplate and the ephod—the robe of the ephod, which had, round the bottom, a bell and a pomegranate alternately—fruitfulness and music—showing the fruitfulness of the priesthood and the music of the priesthood before God, without which emblems the high priest might never enter into the holy of holies, lest he die. To teach man that no creature can ever stand before God but through priesthood, lest he die. Were we to stand before God but in the fruitfulness and music of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, we should die. The plate of pure gold upon his forehead, he went in before God to present the inscription graven there like the engraving

of a signet, “Holiness to the Lord,” to take away the iniquity of the holy things of Israel, and to make those holy things, purged from their iniquity, acceptable to God. Consider the subject of holiness.

I. *The Word Is Used in Three Senses in the Bible.*—1. Sometimes the word “holy” means that which is set apart, consecrated. In that sense the church is holy. 2. There is a still higher sense in which man is perfectly holy. Christ perfects them that are sanctified.

II. *The True Definition of Holiness Is the Likeness of God.*—But we cannot conceive of the likeness of God but through a medium, and that medium must be the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever traits we find characterising the life of Jesus, these make up holiness. 1. The life of Christ was a separate life. 2. He always carried about an inner sanctuary in His own soul. 3. The life of Christ had a subdued tone. 4. It was a life consecrated to an object. 5. It was a life of praise.

III. *Look Upon Holiness as an End to be Obtained.*—Do not seek holiness as a means to happiness, but happiness as a means to holiness. Be more careful about the holiness of little things than of great things.—Dean Vaughan.

LEVITICUS

The Sin and Trespass-Offerings.

“If a soul shall sin through ignorance.”—Leviticus 4: 2.

I. There are, then, *Some Lingering Defilements and Trespasses Adhering to Man, Even Though He Be Justified, Consecrated, and in Fellowship with God.*—A man may run from a gathering storm, and be terribly shocked at the idea of being caught

in it, and exert all his wisdom and his power to escape it, and yet may be made to feel its force; and though a good man's whole being is averse to sin, and he can have no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, it can argue nothing against a remaining weakness subjecting him every day to lacks and failings which would undo him but for the pleadings of his Saviour's blood. Though his face and heart are fully turned away

from sin, it proves nothing against his liability to be "overtaken by a fault."

II. And These Lingering Imperfections and Defects are Real Sins.—Men do not scruple to plead their ignorance, their infirmities, their natural and habitual propensities, in excuse for their misdeeds. But the law of God acknowledges no such plea. Sin is sin; and guilt is a part of its essential nature wherever found. True, in their effects upon the perpetrator, or in their influences upon society, some are worse than others; but in their relations to God and His holy law, they are always the same, always evil, abhorrent, and damning. Men may talk of "little sins," but God never does. Let them be ever so little, they are big enough to sink the soul to everlasting death if uncancelled by the Saviour's blood. All this is very forcibly portrayed in the rites of the sin and trespass-offerings now under consideration. As to sins of ignorance, if the guilty party were a priest, he was to offer "a young bullock"; if a judge or magistrate, he was to offer "a kid of the goats," of the male kind; if one of "the common people," he was to offer "a kid of the goats," of the female kind, or a lamb. And so in the case of trespass, the guilty one was to offer "a lamb or kid"; or, if poor, two doves or young pigeons; or, if poor and unable to procure the doves or pigeons, an offering of fine flour might be substituted as the representative of the animal or bird which could not be procured, but was to be looked upon, not as a meat-offering, but as a "sin-offering," the same as if it were a living animal. These offerings were then to be slain and burned, and their blood presented as the only adequate expiation. And from the nature of the expiation we are to learn God's estimate of the offence. Though committed in ignorance, or no more than a trespass, or an acci-

dental contamination, it required blood and sacrifice to cover it.

III. There is also a Noticeable Gradation in these Sins of Ignorance.—Though they are all sins, so that blood only can atone for them, they are yet more serious and offensive in some persons than in others. When a priest or ruler sinned in this way, a more valuable sacrifice was required than when one of the common people thus sinned. The more prominent and exalted the person offending, the more flagrant was the offence. There is a very serious augmentation of responsibility going along with high station. A public man is like a town clock, upon which much more depends than upon private time-pieces. Hence the necessity for greater care and attention with reference to the one than to the other.

IV. But whilst we are treating of these defects and failings which are to be found in Christian life, let us not overlook the principal point of the text, That There Is An Adequate Remedy for Them.—What! are we to be told that Christ's infinite atonement is that shallow thing, that the first draw of the sinner upon it quite exhausts its virtue, and leaves all subsequent sins to be disposed of by the confessional and the fires of purgatory? Are we to be told that Christ "ever liveth to make intercession," and for this reason "is able to save unto the uttermost," and yet that there is not virtue enough in His mediation to cover a few sins of ignorance and infirmity in Christian life? Are we to behold the priest of a typical economy, with the mere blood of beasts upon his fingers, obtaining a full remission for the Jew, and yet believe that our great High Priest in heaven, bearing the scars of deadly wounds endured for us, is unable to secure mercy for those struggling saints of God, who, in hours of surprise or weakness, become entangled again in guilt of which they heartily

repented the moment it was done? Give us this, and we want no pontifical absolutions, no penal inflictions, no purgatorial fires, to make us acceptable to God. From this general subject we are now led to reflect—
 1. First, what a holy thing is God's law! It finds guilt, not only in the sins which are deliberate, but even in the mistakes of ignorance, the contaminations of accident, and the shortcomings of the holiest saints. 2. Second, what reason have we to cultivate the modest virtues of Christian life—to be moderate in our pretensions, humble in our spirit, charitable in our censures, forgiving under injuries, lenient towards offenders, pungent in our self-examinations, hearty in our repentance, watchful in our walk, constant in our prayers, and deeply anxious to be firmly rooted in the true faith! I care not how good we may be, we are still great offenders, and much worse than we think we are. 3. Finally, how precious is the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!—J. A. Seiss.

The Scapegoat.

"And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness."—Leviticus 16:9, 10.

This chapter is remarkable for the history it gives of one of the most significant institutions of the Jews, namely, the Great Day of Atonement. The tenth day in every seventh month was a high day in Israel. The religious heart of the Hebrew nation was deeply stirred on that day, and every man was "to afflict his soul." He was to humble himself before his Maker an account of his

sins. On that day the high priest was to make atonement for himself, the tabernacle, and all the people. Amongst the many ceremonies which he had to attend to on that day, the one recorded in the text is not the least striking and significant. Two goats are presented at the door of the tabernacle; the one is to be offered as a sacrifice, the other is to be dispatched into the wilderness bearing away with it the sins of the Jewish people. The one is to be sacrificed, and his blood poured on the altar as a sin offering. The other, called the "scapegoat," the high priest, in the presence of all the people, lays his hand upon, confesses over it all the sins of the children of Israel, and sends it away into the wilderness. That sin-burdened animal is heard of no more for ever.

Is this, and the other ceremonies attended to on that memorable day, a mere show—an empty pageant—to attract the gaze of a thoughtless population? Everything attended to on that day was fraught with significance; every act of the priest was a symbol of truth. There are three truths that flash forth with great brilliancy and force from these ceremonies—truths that are of paramount importance to man the world over and the ages through.

I. *The Separation of Man from His Sins Is a Subject of Tremendous Moment.* Why this solemn day in every year, through fifteen long centuries before Christ? Why do all the people cease from their ordinary avocations on this day? Why are the souls of the people afflicted? Why are all hearts heaving with solemn emotions? And why does such a sombre shadow rest upon the people? Why is the high priest so terribly solemn in changing his robes, in ablutions, in sacrificing the lives of innocent creatures, in sprinkling the tabernacle and the mercy-seat so often with blood? Why does he with

such solemnity send the scapegoat into the wilderness? The meaning of all is this, that separation of sin from man is essentially important. And what reflective man, whatever his creed, will not acknowledge it to be so? What man, who has ever felt a conscience, has not felt it to be so?

First: The moral struggles of mankind show the necessity of man being separated from his sins. What are all the sacrifices of priesthoods, the campaigns of patriots, the measures of statesmen, the speculations of moralists, the labors of philanthropy, the incessant strivings of the millions, but so many efforts to throw off sin, to detach humanity from the evils that afflict and burden it. Paul gave voice to the world's heart when he said, "Oh, wretched man that I am," etc.

Secondly: The influence of sin on human nature shows this. What evils has sin entailed on us! It has mortalised our bodies; it has clouded our intellects, polluted our affections, burdened our consciences, enfeebled and enslaved our powers; it has darkened our sky, and withered our landscape. Unless we are delivered from it we are ruined.

Thirdly: The intervention of Christ shows this. Why did the Son of God bow the heavens and come down, assume our nature, and in that nature suffer and die? It was to deliver man from his sins. He came to save His people from their sins, to redeem them from all iniquity, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Another truth which flashes out in the ceremonies of this day is—

II. A Penitential Approach to God Through Sacrifice Is the Divine Method of Separation. On this day the bullock and the goat were slain, and their blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. These sacrifices imply two things—

First: That sin deserved death. Would not this be the impression that

the Jew would receive on this day, as he saw the stroke of death dealt out to these creatures? Surely the idea would strike every spectator, "that the soul that sinneth must die," etc. The sacrifices imply—

Secondly: That through the death of another the sinner's death may be avoided. These sacrifices, undoubtedly, express this, and symbolically predicted the wonderful sacrifice of the Son of God. In both cases there was the suffering of the innocent for the guilty. Christ was "the Holy Lamb of God." "He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," etc. In both cases, the sacrifice was for all the people. The sacrifices on the day of atonement were for all the men of Israel. For whom did Christ die? He suffered, "the just for the unjust." And who are the unjust? "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is through this sacrifice of Christ, that this separation of man from his sins takes place. His blood "cleanseth us from all sin." The song of heaven is, "Unto him that loved us," etc.

Another truth which flashes out in the ceremonies of this day is—

III. That the Separation of Man from His Sin, if Effected Through the True Sacrifice, Is Complete. After the sacrifice had been offered on this day, and the people through Aaron made penitential confession for sin, Aaron lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and sent him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. What became of that goat? It never returned. It was lost in the mysterious solitudes of the wilderness, and never heard of any more. A striking illustration this, of the complete removal of man's guilt, when, through faith

in Christ, his sins are pardoned. What striking language is employed in the Bible to represent the completeness of the separation of man's sin from him, when he is pardoned of God. They are said to be cast behind the back of God. Where is that? His face is everywhere. They are said to be cast into the sea, not into the shallow lake or purling brook where they may appear again, but into the depths of the sea, the abysses of oblivion. They are said to be "removed as far as the east is from the west." How far is that? So far that eternal ages will never bring them together. What is borne away? Not the fact nor the memory of sin, but the guilt of it.

In conclusion, let me again remind you of the necessity of your separation from sin. Sin neutralises every other blessing. You may have great natural powers, extensive culture, a reputation as a man of genius, of honor, of religion; but if sin is joined to you, all these things avail you nothing; they are only as flowers to a corpse, concealing for a moment the ghastliness of death, but leaving the putrefaction to go on. Where sin is, it must sooner or later turn the sweetest things of life into wormwood and gall.

Let me remind you again, that there is no separation of man from his sins, but through the intervention of Christ. He is the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." His blood, His life, cleanseth from all sin. I look in imagination on the myriads of my race that are in the heavenly world, and I ask, Who are these arrayed in white, and whence came they? And the answer comes, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes," etc.

Let me remind you again, that you have only, like Aaron, penitentially to confess your sins over the head of the sacrificial victim, in order to have

them borne away for ever.—David Thomas.

The Day of Atonement.

"*Make an atonement.*"—Leviticus 16: 34.

By referring to verse 29, you will find that this Day of Atonement was appointed for "the seventh month." Seven, as you remember, is a symbol of completeness. This location of these solemnities in the seventh month would therefore seem to refer to the fact noted by the apostle, that it was only "when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law." He lived when the world was sufficiently at peace to give Him a hearing—when the human mind was maturely developed and competent to investigate His claims—when the ways were sufficiently open for the immediate universal promulgation of His Gospel—and when the experience of four thousand years was before men to prove to them how much they needed such a Teacher and Priest as He. His appearance, therefore, to take away our sins was in "the fulness of time"—in the Tisri or September of the world—when everything was mature and ripe. He put the Day of Atonement in "the seventh month." You will also notice that this great expiation service occurred but once in a complete revolution of time—"once a year." A year is a full and complete period. There is no time which does not fall within the year. And the occurrence of the Day of Atonement but once in the entire year plainly pointed to another great fact noted by the apostle, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." There is no repetition in His sacrificial work. "Christ was once offered"; and in that one offering of Himself, all the eras of

human existence were condensed and included. It was the event of this world's year. It is also to be observed that the atoning services of this remarkable day had respect to the whole nation at once. They were "to make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation." Most of the other offerings were personal, having respect to particular individuals and to special cases of sin, uncleanness, or anxiety. But on this day the offerings were general, and the atonement had respect to the entire people. This recalls another great evangelic truth, namely, that Christ "died for all"—"gave Himself a ransom for all"—"by the grace of God tasted death for every man"—and "is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

I. It was to the high priest a day which imposed numerous inconveniences, anxieties, and humiliations. And so was it with our great High Priest when He undertook to expiate the guilt of man. Separated from His heavenly home, He became a suffering, laborious, self-denying servant. No gold glittered upon His brow, or tinkled with His steps, or mingled its glory with royal colours to adorn His robe. No jewelry sparkled on His shoulders or on His breast. No chariots of grandeur bore Him to the place of His mighty deeds of love. And thus amid privations, humiliations and anxieties which made Him sorrowful even unto death, did He go through with the services of the great day of the world's expiation.

II. It was to the high priest a day which imposed all its services upon him alone. Thus, when Jesus undertook the expiation of the world's guilt, "of the people, there was none with Him." Isaiah says, "I looked, and there was none to help." His "own arm brought salvation." He "him own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

III. The Day of Atonement was to the high priest also a very oppressive and exhausting day. His duties, in his complete isolation, were really crushing. So laborious and trying was his work that after it was over the people gathered round him with sympathy and congratulation that he was brought through it in safety. But it was only a picture of that still more crushing load which was laid upon our great High Priest when making atonement for the sins of the world. None among all the sons of the mighty could ever have performed the work which He performed and lived. All His life through there was a weight upon Him so heavy, and ever pressing so mightily upon His soul, that there is no account that He ever smiled. Groans and tears and deep oppression accompanied Him at almost every step. And when we come to view Him in His agonising watchings and prayers in the garden, and under the burdens of insult and wrong which were heaped upon Him in the halls of judgment, and struggling with His load along that dolorous way until the muscles of His frame yielded and He fell faint upon the ground, and oppressed upon the Cross until His inmost soul uttered itself in cries which startled the heavens and shook the world; we have an exhibition of labour, exhaustion, and distress, at which we may well sit down and gaze, and wonder, and weep, in mere sympathy with a sorrow and bitterness beyond all other sorrow.

1. We come now to look at the atonement itself. Here we find that several kinds of offerings were to be made. The object was to make the picture complete, by bringing out in different offerings what could not all be expressed by one. They were only different phases of the same unity, pointing to the one offering of Jesus "Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot

to God." There is a multiplication of victims, that we may see the amplitude and varied applications of the one great atonement effected by Christ Jesus. The most vital, essential, and remarkable of these atoning services was that relating to the two goats, as provided for in vers. 7-10, 15-17, 21, 22. One of these goats was to be slain as a sin-offering, and the other was to have the sins of Israel laid upon its head, and then to be taken away alive and left in the wilderness. The one typified the atonement of Christ in its means and essence; the other the same atonement in its effects.

2. A word now with regard to the people to be benefited by the services of this remarkable day. That the services and offerings of this day were meant for the entire Jewish nation is very clear and distinct. But not all were therefore reconciled and forgiven. The efficacy of these services, in any given case, depended upon the individual himself. The atonement day was to be a day of contrition, of weeping, of soul-sorrow for sin, of confession, reformation, and return to God, a day of heart-melting and charity. Without these accompaniments its oblations were vain, its incense useless, its solemnities but idle ceremonies. And, as it was with the type, so it is with the Antitype. Would you, then, have Christ's atoning day to be a blessing to thy soul, come to it with a moved and melting heart; come to it with thy spirit bowed for thy many, many sins; come to it as the humbled prodigal came back to the kind father he had wronged; come to it as the poor heart-broken publican came, smiting the guilty breast and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"—J. A. Seiss.

'The History of Tithes.

"All the tithes of the land . . . is the Lord's."—Leviticus 27:30-33.

I. *The Scripture Records Concerning the Law of Tithes.*

1. Antecedent to the Mosaic legislation. The principle of dedicating a tenth to God was recognised in the act of Abraham, who paid tithes of his spoils to Melchizedek in his sacerdotal rather than his sovereign capacity (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:6). Later, in Jacob's vow (Gen. 28:22), the dedication of a "tenth" presupposes a sacred enactment, or a custom in existence which fixed that proportion rather than any other proportion, such as a seventh or twelfth.

2. The Mosaic statutes. These given in this section lay claim in God's name to the tenth of produce and cattle. An after enactment fixed that these tithes were to be paid to the Levites for their services (Num. 18:21-24), who were to give a tithe of what they received to the priests (vers. 26-28). The sacred festivals were later made occasion for a further tithe (Deut. 12:5, 6, 11, 17; 14:22, 23); which was allowed to come in money value rather than in kind. (Deut. 14:24-26).

3. Hezekiah's reformation. This was signalised by the eagerness with which the people came with their tithes (2 Chron. 31:5, 6).

4. After the Captivity. Nehemiah made marked and emphatic arrangements concerning the tithing (Neh. 10:37; 12:44).

5. Prophet's teachings. Both Amos (4:4) and Malachi (3:10) enforce this as a duty, by severely rebuking the nation for its neglect—as robbing God.

6. In Christ's day. Our Lord exposed and denounced the ostentatious punctiliousness of the Pharisees over their tithing (Matt. 23:23).

7. Teaching of the New Testa-

ment. The fact of the existence of ministers as a distinct class, assumes provision made for their maintenance. The necessity for such provision, and the right on which it is founded, are recognised in such texts as Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7; Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:7-14.

II. *The Ecclesiastical Development of the Demand for Tithes.*

1. The Fathers urged the obligation of tithing on the earliest Christians. The "Apostolical Canons," the "Apostolical Constitutions," St. Cyprian on "The Unity of the Church," and the writings of Ambrose, Chrysostom, Augustine, and other Fathers of both divisions of the early Church, abound with allusions to this as a duty; and the response was made, not in enforced tithing, but by voluntary offerings.

2. The legislation of the first Christian emperors recognised the obligation of maintaining the ministers of Christ. But while they assigned lands and other property to their support, they enacted no general payment of the tenth of the produce of the lands.

3. Ancient Church councils favoured tithings of land and produce, e.g., the Councils of Tours, A. D. 567; the second Council of Macon, A. D. 585; the Council of Rouen, A. D. 650; of Nantes, A. D. 660; of Metz, 756.

4. Its first imperial enactment Charlemagne (king of the Franks, A. D. 768-814, and Roman Emperor, A. D. 800-814) originated the enactment of tithes as a public law, and by his capitularies formally estab-

lished the practice over the Roman Empire which his rule swayed. From this start it extended itself over Western Christendom; and it became general for a tenth to be paid to the Church.

5. Introduction of tithes into England. Offa, king of Mercia, is credited with its assertion here, at the close of the eighth century. It spread over other divisions of Saxon England, until Ethelwulf made it a law for the whole English realm. It remained optional with those who were compelled to pay tithes to determine to what Church they should be devoted, until Innocent III. addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, A. D. 1200, a decretal requiring tithes to be paid to the clergy of the parish to which payees belonged. About this time, also, tithes, which had originally been confined to those called *prædial*, or the fruits of the earth, was extended to every species of profit and to the wages of every kind of labour.

6. The great and small tithe. The great tithe was made upon the main products of the soil, corn, hay, wood, &c.; the small on the less important growths. To the rector the great tithes of a parish are assigned, and to the vicar the small.

7. Tithes paid "in kind." These claim the tenth portion of the product itself (vers. 30-33). This is varied by a payment of an annual valuation; or an average taken over seven years; or by a composition, which, in a bulk sum, redeems the land from all future impost, rendering it henceforth "tithe free."—W. H. Jellie.

NUMBERS

The Mercy of God.

"*The Lord is longsuffering and of great mercy.*"—Numbers 14:18.

I. *What We Are to Understand by the Mercy of God.* It is His goodness to them that are in misery, or liable to it. Thus the mercy of God

is usually, in Scripture, set forth to us by the affection of pity and compassion; which is an affection that causeth a sensible commotion in us, upon the apprehension of some great evil that lies upon another, or hangs over him. Hence it is that God is said, in Scripture, to be grieved and afflicted for the miseries of men. But though God is pleased in this manner to set forth His mercy and tenderness towards us, yet we must take heed how we clothe the Divine nature with the infirmities of human passions. When God is said to pity us, we must take away the imperfection of His passion, the commotion and disturbance of it, and not imagine any such thing in God; but we are to conceive that the mercy and compassion of God, without producing the disquiet, do produce the effects of the most sensible pity.

II. That This Perfection belongs to God. I will only produce some of those many texts of Scripture which attribute this perfection to God. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious" (Exod. 34: 6). "The Lord thy God is a merciful God" (Deut. 4: 31). "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful" (2 Chron. 34: 9). "Ready to pardon, gracious and merciful" (Neh. 9: 17). "All the paths of the Lord are mercy" (Psa. 25: 10). "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy" (Psa. 62: 12). "Merciful and gracious" (Psa. 103: 8). "With the Lord there is mercy" (Psa. 130: 7). And so (Jer. 3: 12; Joel 2: 13; Jonah 4: 2; Luke 6: 36), "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The Scripture speaks of this as most natural to Him. In 2 Cor. 1: 3, He is called "the Father of mercies."

III. The Degree of It. A God of great mercy. Scripture speaks of it as if God was wholly taken up with it, as if it was His constant employment, so that, in comparison of it, He

doth hardly display any other excellency; "All the paths of the Lord are mercy" (Psa. 25: 10); as if, in this world, God had a design to advance His mercy above His other attributes. The mercy of God is now in the throne;—this is the day of mercy; and God doth display it, many times, with a seeming dishonour to His other attributes, His justice, and holiness, and truth.

1. Preventing mercy. Does not that man owe more to his physician who prevents his sickness, than he who, after the languishing, the pains of several months, is at length cured by him?

2. Forbearing mercy. And this is the patience of God, which consists in the deferring or moderating of our deserved punishment. Hence it is that "slow to anger" and "of great mercy," do so often go together.

3. Comforting mercy (2 Cor. 1: 3).

4. His relieving mercy, in supplying those that are in want, and delivering those that are in trouble.

5. Pardoning mercy. And here the greatness and fulness of God's mercy appears, because our sins are great (Psa. 78: 38). And the multitude of God's mercies because our sins are many (Psa. 51: 1). Uses—
 (1) We ought with thankfulness to acknowledge and admire the great mercy of God to us. (2) The great mercy of God to us should stir up in us shame and sorrow for sin. The judgments of God may break us, but the consideration of God's mercy should rather melt us into tears (Luke 7: 47). (3) Let us imitate the merciful nature of God. (4) If the mercy of God be so great, this may comfort us against despair. (5) By way of caution against the presumptuous sinner. If there be any that encourage themselves in sin, upon the hopes of His mercy, let such know that God is just, as well as merciful.—Tillotson.

DEUTERONOMY

Judging.

"Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him."—
Deuteronomy 1:16.

The rules here laid down, while primarily applicable in the administration of law, are, in their spirit and for the most part in their letter, equally fitted to guide our private judgments. A proneness to judge is condemned by Christ (Matt. 7:1), but His rebuke of the censorious spirit is not to be read as forbidding the framing of such judgments upon the character, actions, and pretensions of others as the circumstances of our position may render necessary. We are called every day of our lives to form, and frequently to express, judgments upon men, measures, causes, theories, disputes, proposals; judgments as to true and false, right and wrong, wise and unwise, expedient and inexpedient. Matters are appealed to us as individuals, or as a part of the general community, on which judgment is expressly asked. We must judge that we may know how to act. All this involves the possibility of judging rashly; of judging with bias and prejudice; of judging so as to do wrong to individuals; of judging so as to injure truth and retard progress and improvement. The text teaches us, on the contrary—

I. *That Causes, Before Being Judged, Are to Be Fairly Heard.*—How many judgments are passed daily in utter ignorance of the real facts of the case, and without any attempt to ascertain them, perhaps without the means of ascertaining them! Such judgments are *ipso facto*

unjust. It is only by the rarest chance they can be right, and their rightness being accidental does not justify them. Let judgments be reserved for cases in which we have an opportunity of full investigation. Hear both sides, and hear them (1) fully, (2) candidly, and (3) patiently.

II. *That Causes, After Being Heard, Are to Have Judgment Passed Upon Them With Strict Impartiality.*—“Judge not according to the appearance,” said Jesus, “but judge righteous judgment”—an instance illustrating that wider view of judging which we are here taking (John 7:24). Equal measure is to be meted out to all. We are to judge impartially as between brother and brother, fellow-citizen and foreigner, rich and poor, applying the same principles and standards to each case, and keeping in view the essential merits as the one thing to be regarded. This is the plain rule of justice, though we all feel how difficult it is to act up to it.

III. *That Judgment Upon Causes Is to Be Given Fearlessly.*—“Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man.” (Regent Morton’s eulogy on Knox—“There lies he who never feared the face of man.”) Even when just judgment is being pronounced internally, the fear of man, or the desire of man’s favor, or the dread of temporal consequences, often leads to a time-serving tampering with conviction, to a saying and doing of the thing we do not at heart approve of. This is the worst kind of cowardice.

IV. *That Judgment Upon Causes Is to Be Given Under a Due Sense of Responsibility to God.*—“The judgment is God’s.” Judges are His vicegerents, deriving their authority from Him, expressing the judgment

of His righteousness, anticipating His own final judgment, and themselves responsible to Him for the manner in which they exercise their functions. Every biased, untrue, and insincere judgment is a misrepresentation of that truth and rectitude which have their ground in God's own being.

V. *That in Causes on Which We Are Incompetent to Pronounce, Judgment Is Not to Be Attempted.*—(Verse 17).—J. Orr.

Tardy Repentance.

"And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you."—Deuteronomy 1:45.

In the conduct of these Israelites we have a typical exhibition of human nature. In its folly, its fickleness, its unreasonableness, and its obstinacy. Forbidden to enter Canaan, they change their mood, and nothing will serve them but to "go up" and do the thing they had formerly said they would not do. They are vociferous in their professions of repentance, and will not be reasoned out of their self-willed purpose, but persist in following it up to their own after discomfiture. We have here to notice—

I. *How Unchanged Character May Coexist With a Changed Form of Manifestation.* — Underneath these loud professions of repentance, "We have sinned" (ver. 41), it is not difficult to detect: 1. The old *unbelief*. They disbelieve God's threatening, as before they refused to believe His promise. 2. The old *self-will*. It is not what God wills, but what they will themselves that is to be done. They do not ask, "Will God permit us to do this?" but they take the law into their own hands, and ignore God's wishes altogether. 3. The old

contumacy. Their wills are wholly unsubmissive. In revolt yesterday against their duty, and today against their punishment. They will not hear warning (ver. 43), but pursue their own way. All this stamps their repentance as not only tardy, but insincere. Analogous to much of the repentance caused by fear of punishment, fear of exposure, fear of death; and points to the defects in superficial repentance generally.

II. *How Insincere Repentance Naturally Passes Over Into Presumptuous Sin.*—It does this inasmuch as there was never in it the element of real submission. The undertaking of the Israelites was typical of many more. It was: 1. Presumptuously conceived. 2. Presumptuously prepared for. 3. Presumptuously persevered in. It is, therefore, the type of all undertakings set on foot and carried out (1) in defiance of God's will; (2) without God's assistance; (3) in face of God's expressed displeasure. It is a case, in short, of flying in the face of God; of defying Him, and entering into direct contest with Him; as every one does whose schemes are in opposition even to natural and economical, and still more if they are in opposition to moral and spiritual, laws; or, in any way contrary to what we know to be God's will. Presumption may show itself in refusal to be saved, except in ways or on terms of our own dictation.

III. *How Godless Endeavour Recoils in Disaster on Those Who Persist in It* (ver. 44.) So must it be with all schemes that have God's frown upon them.

Note—1. Repentance may come too late (ver. 45; Matt. 25:11; Luke 13:25). 2. Disobedience may cloak itself in the guise of obedience (ver. 41). 3. The test of obedience is willingness to do what God requires at the time He requires it, and not at some time of our own.—J. Orr.

2 SAMUEL

Joy Amongst the Enemies of the Church.

"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."—2 Samuel 1:20.

"Tell it not in Gath," etc. A poetical deprecation; for already had it been told among the Philistines, and triumphed over; and yet would be. The language expresses David's sorrow at the joy of the Philistines, and its cause. The words have often been used to express the concern of good men when Christians give occasion to the enemies of Christ's kingdom to rejoice.

I. *The Occasions of Such Joy.*—1. In general, *the misfortunes of the Church*, whatever hinders its advancement or causes reversal. 2. In particular, *the inconsistencies of professing Christians*. It is amazing how men will gloat over the occasional lapses of Christians into sins which they are themselves habitually committing. Still it is a serious enhancement of the guilt of such lapses that they cause "the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (ch. 12:14). 3. *Contentions and divisions among Christians.* When these are rife, the world is apt to exclaim in scorn, "See how these Christians love one another!" 4. *Failures in their work.*

II. *The Causes of Such Joy.*—1. *Hatred of God and goodness.* To "rejoice in iniquity" is a sure sign of this; and to rejoice in the enfeebling of the power which most of all tends to its subjugation—the power of Christian life and teaching—is scarcely less so. It is a diabolical joy. 2. *The encouragement in sin which is derived from the faults of good men.*

Sinners feel as if justified in their own sins when Christians fall into them; their guilty consciences are relieved. As if sin in themselves were less sinful because practised by those who profess to have renounced it; or as if the Law of God, which condemns the Christian's occasional sins, did not at least equally condemn the habitual sins of others. Rather should they remember that the knowledge of the evil of sin by which they condemn others is to their own condemnation (Rom. 2:1, 3). They ought, therefore, to take warning instead of indulging satisfaction.

III. *How Christians Should Be Affected By It.*—1. *They should be careful not needlessly to publish that which will produce it.* "Tell it not," etc. Not needlessly; for oftentimes secrecy is impossible, sometimes it would be injurious. We must not deny facts, nor palliate sin, to prevent the triumph of enemies. But we ought not to eagerly announce to the world the occurrences which tend to our humiliation and their exultation. (1) For the sake of those who would exult. That they may not add to their sins by their unholy joy, nor become more hardened in them. (2) Lest we should put stumbling-blocks in the way of feeble Christians; or (3) discourage our brethren in their conflicts with evil; or (4) lessen the power of the testimony of the Church on the side of Christ and holiness. 2. *They should be still more careful so to live as to give no occasion for such exultation.* "That by well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet. 2:15). 3. *They should in no degree imitate it.* Which they do when they rejoice at any scandal which arises in another Church that they regard as a rival, or at failure on its part in efforts to

do good. Christian love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," and will be grieved at sin wherever it may be found, and at the failure of Christian work by whomsoever it may be done.—George Wood.

Self-Judgment.

"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man."—2 Samuel 12:7.

It is not the story of David's sin, and its punishment, with his bitter repentance and ultimate forgiveness, which I desire to deal with now, but the great principle of self-judgment illustrated in the scene.

I. The First Thing That Strikes Us Is the Blindness and Infatuation of the Man to Have Missed the Application of the Parable. It seems an almost impossible state of self-deception, which could let him flare out in indignant virtue against the supposed culprit, and never once dream that the case could apply to himself. But it is not such an impossible thing as it looks, nay, it is even one of the commonest facts of morals, and one which we can easily illustrate any day among ourselves. We nod assent to a general statement of right and wrong, accept principles, even give our unbiassed judgment on concrete cases that are mentioned, and yet never make the personal application. Conscience works out correctly in an abstract case, when there seems no personal interest. Till we come to the bar naked, without veils and excuses and palliations, as David was tricked into doing, we never do justice against ourselves.

II. In Religion We Are, if Possible, More Easily Biassed by Personal Considerations. The self-deceit we are speaking about would seem incredible to the man who knows his own heart and the deceitfulness of

sin. David must have previously deluded himself, or he could not have been so insensible. We are all right on the general principles of religion, but personal religion begins exactly where we leave off. Our great necessity is to relate our particular case to the general law. In assenting to the judgment, which Nathan meant to rouse in him about the rich man, David was passing judgment on himself unconsciously. This is the stumbling-block in the way of all amendment, that sin is not accepted as such; we do not recognise; the word has not come to us, striking us dumb: "Thou art the man." We must discover, and acknowledge, and confess our sin, before forgiveness is possible—discover first of all self-revelation, self-judgment, self-condemnation, these represent the first task of religion. Till we have come to grips with self, we cannot come to terms with God.

III. Rigorous Self-Judgment Is the First Requisite of Moral Life, to Turn the Light in on Self. Many religious people are worms of the earth, with their whole nature corrupt in their general confession, and very fine gentlemen in detail—never dealing with self in any direct fashion, never hearing once the searching word, Thou art the man. We have seen how hard honest self-judgment is, and yet how essential. Essential—it is not only first, but it is also last. Would you then know the method, the infallible way of putting self to the proof? The method for us is this—bring yourselves, your work, motives, ambitions, inner thoughts into the presence of Christ, and judge them there. He is the Light in this sense also. Until we make Christ our conscience, bringing everything to be judged by the Light, we will keep confusing the issues, and disguising our sins, and finding all manner of self-escape, excuses, and counter-charges.—Hugh Black.

1 KINGS

The Impenitent Seeker.

"He shall tell thee what shall become of the child."—1 Kings 14:3.

The day of Judgment will come at the end of the world, when the heavens and earth shall be burnt up. But this has its prelude in a season of judgments which overtakes the sinner in this life. Jeroboam, having sinned away his day of grace, had now entered into such a season. But of this he seems to have been doubtful. Hence learn—

I. That the Sinner May Be Surprised in His Season of Judgments.—

1. *That there are such seasons is evident.* (1) Witness the great deluge. Also the rain of fire on the cities of the plain. The overthrow of nations. Signal visitations upon notorious sinners. (2) Such were presages of the awful judgment to come (Matt. 24: 37-39). 2. *But all afflictions are not such retributions.* (1) Some are entailed upon us through the fall, and alike affect the penitent and impenitent (Gen. 3: 16-18; Job 5: 17; 1 Cor. 10: 13). (2) Some come to us through the wickedness and blundering of those around us. Many suffer, irrespective of their character, as when a ship is wrecked through the drunkenness of the master. (3) Some are appointed or permitted for disciplinary and educational purposes. These are often amongst our greatest blessings. (4) Sometimes we suffer for the benefit of others—vicariously. When this is voluntary it is very Christ-like (see Psa. 22: 11; Col. 1: 24). (5) Under all these we have a refuge in God. 3. *These may be confounded.* (1) Had Jeroboam known that the mercy of God had reached its limit, and that the season of retribution had set in, he might have

spared his queen her journey to Shiloh. (2) But what else could he have expected? Was he not obstinately wedded to his sins? Had he not before him the history of Saul? (3) Men still, in our day, presume upon the mercy of God to their destruction. Eminently the case with those who defer repentance.

II. That a Sinner May Seek the Lord to No Good Purpose.—

This happens—1. *When the end sought is unprofitable.* (1) Such was the case with Jeroboam. His inquiry should have been, not, "What shall become of the child?" but, "How may the anger of God be averted?" But he was not prepared to repent of his sin. (2) His inquiry was one of curiosity as to the future. Similar curiosity was manifested by Saul under similar circumstances. It is unseemly for a sinner to pry into Divine mysteries rather than seek the salvation of his soul. 2. *When the spirit of the seeker is improper.* (1) He did not, indeed, seek his calves. He rather sought Ahijah, because the spirit of prophecy was with him. But he had no such faith in his calves. (2) Why, then, did he not renounce them? He had reasons of worldly policy against this (ch. 12: 26-28). He was therefore a deceiver of the people. Hence he would have his queen disguise herself. So several of the Popes were known to have been infidels. (3) So were he and his dupes doomed to perish together (Matt. 15: 14; 2 Thess. 2: 9-12; 1 Tim. 4: 1, 2). 3. *When the manner of the search is unworthy.* (1) He paid a respect to the man of God. This was the meaning of his present (1 Sam. 9: 7, 8). Hence such gifts are called blessings (Gen. 33: 10, 11; Judg. 1: 15; 1 Sam. 25: 17; 30: 26, marg.; 2 Kings 5: 15). (2) Even Jacob would eat of his son's venison

before he proceeded to bless him (Gen. 27:4, 19, 25, 31; see also 1 Kings 17:11). (3) So are God's blessings and sacrifices offered to Him commonly associated (Gen. 8:20-22; 9:1-17). All His blessings come to us through the sacrifice of Christ; and especially so when we, by faith, present Christ to Him. (4) But here was no sacrifice; and the value of the gift was small. - What were a few loaves, a few cakes, and a cruse of honey as a gift from a king! (2 Kings 5:5; 8:9.) The meanness of his present was another reason why he would have his queen disguised.

What an argument for early piety is here! Surrender to Christ before you are overtaken by a season of judgments. How admonitory is this subject to the effect that prayer should be true; that we should seek the right thing, in the right spirit, and in the right manner!—J. A. MacDonald.

A Personalised Conscience.

"And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"—1 Kings 17:18.

Elijah must have been surprised. He had come into this woman's house when she was in the direst misery and poverty. When he first saw her she was picking up sticks with which to kindle her fire for a meal preparatory to death. Nevertheless, she shares her scanty meal and oil with him, and he is her guest for many days. And all the while the miraculous is about her. The meal is never finished, the oil never fails. Then, as if to demonstrate that troubles never come singly, her son, her only child, sickened and died. A very ordinary thing occurred. Her heart let out its secret.

The sin she had guarded with vigilance and terror leaps to her lips. Elijah was a conscience to her. Remorse and terror held her in their sway. Elijah's presence was doomsday. In his presence she was conscious of sin.

I. *The Tragedy of Sin Is the Callousness It Produces.* This woman had almost forgotten her sin. She had grown accustomed to its thought. That is the tragedy of guilt. It corrodes the heart. All the subtle and tender sensibilities are hardened. What a callous world we live in! We live on day by day hardly conscious, seldom seeing the evils that are, the shame of human life. We are callous to the liquor traffic. We pass the public-houses, we smell the odious fumes, we hear the ribald laughter, we see debased men, wretched women, pinched and shivering children. It is hateful, terrible, loathsome. But we have grown accustomed to it. We are callous to the miseries of the poor. We have seen the slums and hovels in which they herd. We admit that society, the great abstraction, is at fault, but familiarity has wrought callousness. We are callous to the pains and wrongs of children. We know that thousands are starved, famished, thrashed, exposed. We applaud the work of men like Dr. Barnardo, George Miller, and Doctor Stephenson, but we are really callous to it all. It is part of English life as we have always known it.

II. *A Personalised Conscience Is the Divine Exposure and Rebuke of Sin.* History is the illustration of this. The prophets of Israel were consciences incarnate. God was in them. Luther was a conscience. Papal Europe crouched before him. The priests gnashed their teeth and hissed in wrath, but the people saw God in him and heard the word of Eternal Life. John Wesley was a conscience. He convicted the State

Church of supineness, ineptitude, and throughout the length and breadth of the land he convicted tens of thousands of sin. A conscience personalised has ever been and always will be an exposure and condemnation of sin. No matter how callous men may be, their hearts will be pierced by the living God in a great man's conscience.

III. Godliness Is the Secret of This Ethical Authority. Godliness is the greatest power in human life. It is influence, authority, sovereignty.

Every Church should be a conscience. The Church is a community of godly men and women, and their united influence should reflect the God they love and serve. Every Christian should be a conscience. We should be so full of God that everywhere our ethical influence should be felt. This is the need of the times. Better Christians, the best Christians. Let us go to God, let us keep near Him, and we will be consciences to others. The callous and the cynical will be shamed and saved.—J. G. Bowran.

2 CHRONICLES

Systematic Church Finance.

"Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord; and they prepared them, and brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully."—2 Chronicles 31:11-12.

Hezekiah was careful to provide for the distribution of the firstfruits and tithes and special offerings among the priests and Levites. He had cells, or chambers, constructed for their reception and every needed arrangement made for the due apportionment of all that was stored among those for whom it was intended. There are three points worthy of consideration.

I. The Distinctly Sacred Character of Church Finance. What was given here was placed within the precincts of the temple, for it was given to the Lord while it was appropriated to His ministers. It was a religious act on the part of the donors, and not less so on the part of those whose special duty it was to distribute it. "They brought in the dedicated things faithfully"; and, "according to their fidelity did they show themselves holy in regard to the holy;" i.e. "they acted in a holy manner with the holy gifts,

distributed them disinterestedly and impartially" (Keil). There is no reason why both the giving of money to the cause of God (and included in this is the contribution to the sustenance of the Christian ministry) and also the allocation of all such money should not be a thoroughly devout and pious action. It may be rendered as truly "unto the Lord" as the singing of a hymn or the delivery of a discourse. It should be a sacred service, offered conscientiously, devoutly, holily.

II. Systematic Collection of Church Finance. While considerable room was left under the Law for spontaneous liberality and for special offerings under peculiar circumstances, there were certain regulations as to tithes and firstfruits (ver. 5). These latter were not optional, but obligatory; at the same time, they do not seem to have been recoverable by legal process, but they point to systematic contribution not unattended with special and spontaneous bestowments. And this surely is the right principle in the Christian Church.

1. Let every man consider what proportion of his income, considering (1) the amount of his receipts, and also (2) the measure of his liability

ties, he can possibly devote to the cause of God and man, of religion and philanthropy; and let him set that apart.

2. Let every one of us be prompted to give special help whenever some specially powerful appeal is made to our spiritual convictions or our human sympathies.

III. *Systematic Distribution.* This is something which must depend upon the constitution of each particular Church, and must vary according to that constitution. But there are some general principles, partly suggested by these verses.

1. Let every care be taken that all that is contributed be devoted and distributed, none being wasted or perverted. Here is scope for carefulness and for faithfulness.

2. Let the necessities of those on whom God has laid the weightier domestic burdens be generously met.

3. Let those who are engaged in the less prominent places be as much regarded as those who are "serving at Jerusalem" (see vers. 15, 19).

4. Let men of acknowledged probity and capacity have charge of the treasury (see vers. 12-14).—Wm. Clarkson.

JOB

Satan's Estimate of Human Nature.

"All that a man hath will he give for his life."—Job. 2: 4.

The Book of Job is a historical poem, and one of the most ancient. In form it is dramatic. We have to be on our guard as to the degree of authority with which we invest the statements of the different interlocutors. Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz spoke for themselves only. We must not think all their utterances were inspired. So the utterances of Satan are his own, and are not to be treated as inspired. This proverbial sentence means that a man will give up everything to save his life. The insinuation is that Job served God from merely selfish considerations. Satan was only measuring Job and mankind generally by his own bushel. It must be admitted that there is a degree of truth in the saying. If it had not been so, there would have been no plausibility about it, and it could have imposed on no one. A lie, pure, simple, and unadulterated, does little harm in the world. Some one hath pithily said, "A lie always needs a

truth for a handle to it; else the hand would cut itself which sought to drive it home upon another." The worst lies, therefore, are those whose blade is false, but whose handle is true. There is an instinctive love of life in every human being. Life is sweet, even with all its trials, sorrows, and, in many cases, miseries; and there is a clinging to it in every heart. And this love of life is not only an instinctive principle; within certain limits it may even be a positive duty. But the affirmation of the text is not true—

I. *To the History of Even Unregenerate Human Nature.*—Even in the unconverted there are principles, some evil and some good, which, becoming dominant, subordinate to themselves the love of life. Such as the passions of hatred and revenge; the love of adventure; duellings; love of knowledge; science; salvation of the imperilled by water, fire, or disease. So, in the name of humanity, we may repudiate the assertion that, as a universal thing, men will do anything to save their lives.

II. *How Much Less True Is the Text of the Renewed Heart.*—That

which is the ruling passion in a man rules over the love of life, as well as other things in him. In the truly godly man the ruling passion is love to God, and love to his neighbor for God's sake, and that dominates over all things else. The adversary, though he used every advantage, could not succeed in shaking Job's confidence in God. (Illustrate from cases of three Hebrew youths, Daniel, Paul, etc.). Satan spoke words of calumny, not of truth. Learn—1. Through our self-love Satan's most insidious temptations come to us. With this estimate of human nature in his mind, he has kept continually appealing to men's love of life, and it is astonishing in how many cases he has at least partially succeeded. 2. The truest greatness of humanity lies in falsifying this assertion of Satan. Since we call ourselves by the name of Christ, let us be distinguished by His unselfishness. That only is a heroic life which forgets itself in service.—W. M. Taylor.

God's Use of Sin.

"Thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."—Job 13:26.

One of the commonest ideas regarding sin, at the present time, is that when once done, it is also done with. Half the human race persist in viewing sin as no more than a conventional name applied by religious people to the minor slips of life's journey, mere blunders and peccadilloes scarcely worth mentioning, which anyhow leave no trace behind them. They would stare at the suggestion that sin becomes a living bit of ourselves. If some bad habit, like cheating or vanity or drunkenness, begins to get the upper hand, and too much obtrude its presence, they imagine that there is no more difficulty in dropping it out of the character

quietly than when a train shunts a heated freight car into a siding. Only speak the word, and the power of the past is broken.

Let me speak of four ways in which God makes us to inherit our iniquities. They are closely bound up with each other, but we may consider them briefly in separation.

I. *Our Sins Come Back on Us as Bitter Memories.* These bad deeds or thoughts leave poisoned wounds; they leave stains that burn as well as soil; even if there were no God, still we should feel them a disgrace to manhood. And perhaps of all the feelings that visit the human heart none is sadder than the helplessness with which we behold time flowing on resistlessly, bearing with it into the past wrongdoing we can never now set right.

II. *Our Sins Come Back on Us as Disqualifying Infirmities.* It is common knowledge that a man may so live that he becomes unfit for certain kinds of delicate and important work; his hand shakes, his eyesight deteriorates, and he has to step down in the scale of industry, and adopt some lower form of employment. Never more in this world, perhaps, will he be fit for his old business. Now the same thing may happen in the moral and spiritual life. Sin may be pardoned, while yet punishment remains. "Thou wast a God that forgavest, but thou tookest vengeance on their inventions." Moses, for his sin, had to lie down in a lonely grave outside the Promised Land, after one look at the country others were entering. David, because of his blood-stained hands, was refused permission to build God's temple. So, like these men, we may shut ourselves out by sin from certain fields of usefulness or enjoyment.

III. *Once More, Our Sins Come Back as Guilty Burdens.* Time never wears out sin's guilt. To-day in the Egyptian sands they are finding

manuscripts two thousand years old; and when the skilled expert pours the reagent over the papyrus surface the old writing stands out again, bold and clear; and God can do that with a human soul. He can give the startled conscience a telescopic and microscopic power which makes past sins present and small sins great.

IV. Lastly, Our Sins Come Back as Motives to Seek God's Mercy. And here at last we light upon the hidden purpose operating in all the other uses God makes of our transgressions. For remember the most important thing about sin is not its power of embittering memory, or its disqualifying consequences, or even its burden of guilt; the most important thing about sin is this, that it can be forgiven. The prodigal son had been dissolute and reckless; but then the prodigal son had a father. That changed all the outlook. There are two wrong ways of regarding sin, levity and despair; the one declaring that forgiveness is unnecessary, the other protesting that forgiveness is impossible, and that we have no choice but to carry our burden to the end without hope or relief. And the one right way is just trustful penitence, just coming back to God, like the lad in the parable, and saying, "Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."—H. R. Mackintosh.

Hope Held Out to Anxious Inquirers.

"*And where is now my hope?*"—Job 17:15.

I. The Inquiry.—"Where is My Hope?" 1. Is your hope in the world? This is the case with multitudes. Then your hope is set on that which is not good. 2. Is your hope in sin? Is that possible? The pleasures of sin are but for a season, the

pains of sin are for eternity. 3. Is your hope in your works? This was the case with the ancient Pharisees. They "went about to establish their own righteousness," but failed in the attempt. All who are "of the works of the law" are under it as a covenant; and as such it requires perfect obedience, or there is no justification by it. 4. Is your hope in your knowledge? "Knowledge puffeth up." "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 5. Is your hope in Christ? Then it is in the right place. The hope of Job was in Him—the Redeemer; so was the hope of the primitive Christians.

II. The Cases in Which Inquirers Are Warranted to Hope.—We are not warranted to hold out hope in every case. You must be made to feel your guilt, before you will give up your false hope. You must be made to feel your insufficiency before you will apply to Christ for relief. 1. If you repent you are warranted to hope. 2. If you believe, you are warranted to hope. 3. If you obey, you are warranted to hope. 4. If you love Christ, you are warranted to hope. 5. So you are, if you love the house of prayer. 6. And if you love the brethren. 7. And if you seek the Divine glory.

III. The Qualities of the Hope Which the Gospel Inspires.—1. It is a Divine hope. 2. A lively hope. 3. A joyful hope. 4. A liberal hope. 5. A permanent hope.

In conclusion, let us consider the inquiry in the text in reference to ourselves, and thus endeavour to make a suitable improvement of the subject. Where is now my hope?—Thomas Hitchin.

Reason for the Existence of the Wicked on Earth.

"*Wherfore do the wicked live?*"—Job 21:7.

I. As Witnesses to Attest.—1. The amount of freedom with which man is endowed. How free is man compared to everything about him. 2. The wonderful forbearance of God. 3. The existence of an extraordinary element in the Divine government of this world. We know that in heaven beings live and are happy because they are holy; we are taught that in hell there is inexpressible misery because there is such awful sin. But here are men living often to a good old age, often possessing all they can wish of earthly comfort, and yet rebels against God, without repentance, without faith, without love, and we wonder why this world is thus an exception. Earth is under a mediatorial government. This great mystery of Christ's suffering for man, and prolonging his probation, can alone explain the other great mystery, that men of debased spirit and godless life are permitted to live here instead of being banished to hell.

II. *As Instruments to Discipline.*—1. In calling out resistance. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; when he is tried he shall receive a crown of life." The wicked are often as the chisel by which God carves out the good man's character, the fires by which it is purified. 2. By calling out the Christian's benevolence. Our compassion, prayers, self-sacrifice, work, are all called forth by the existence of the wicked.

III. *As Beacons to Warn.*—1. As to the progress of sin. 2. As to the effects of sin.

IV. *As Criminals to Reform.*—This is the grand end of their prolonged life. The world is a great reformatory.—Urijah R. Thomas.

Justification.

"How then can man be justified with God?"—Job 25:4.

Conversion is a human act. It is the turning of the sinner in will and in act to his God. Justification is a Divine act, or rather a series of acts. Man turns, but it is only God who justifies.

I. It is plain that when summoned to and standing before God's judgment-seat, no sorrow, however deep and real, for the past; no promise, however reliable, for the future, will suffice us. Plainly, then, *the justification of the sinner is not an act of his own.* It is God that justifieth. We cannot, as innocent, claim justification; but we may, as guilty, crave pardon. He can forgive us our sins. He can acquit us for the sake of another, not our own. This is what God's justification in the first instance means. It is pardon, it is remission of sins.

II. *Then comes the difficult question:* How can God's mercy be reconciled with His justice? How can God justly pardon sinners? That was a truth hidden from the ages and generations, and revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Thus, sinful in ourselves, we are justified in Christ, as joined to Christ, as part of Christ. The justification of man is thus the Divine acquittal of man for the Son of Man's sake. God accepts us in His Beloved Son, who for our sins deserved to be rejected.

III. *But We Must Not Stop Here.* God's purpose, God's redeeming and sanctifying work, for and in us all has this great end and aim to make us holy. Human happiness, apart from holiness, is not God's purpose. Holiness, without happiness, is indeed, though men do not realise it, a practical impossibility. God regards us as part of the new creation. He pardons us for the sake of Him to whom we are united. We are taught that justification, like sanctification, is

a work of the Spirit of God. God's mercy is man's only plea. Death is sin's wages. Eternal life is God's gift.—F. Watson.

Justification.

"How then can man be justified with God?"—Job 25:4.

I. *What Justification Is.*—The being accounted righteous though we are not so. When brought into a justified state we are treated as if we were altogether righteous. Whose is this righteousness? Whence is it derived? Not from ourselves or any remaining excellence in human nature. We must be accounted righteous, and justified with God, by other merits than our own. It is to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are indebted.

II. *How We Cannot Be Justified.*
—1. Not by repentance. 2. Not by amendment of life. 3. Not by our sincerity. 4. Not by any works whatever of our own.

III. *How Alone We Can Be Justified.*—We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Why does faith alone, faith without works, justify us? Because faith is the only medium by which we can receive Christ.

IV. *Why a Man Can Be Justified In No Other Way Than the Way in Which He Is Justified.*—1. It is God's determination that "no flesh shall glory in His sight." 2. God has determined that His Son alone shall be exalted in the justification of a sinner. 3. It is God's determination to magnify His name and word above all the philosophy and traditions of men. 4. It is a merciful God's gracious determination to afford grounds of the most abundant consolation to the humbled and believing sinner.—W. Mudge.

Character and Hope of the Hypocrite.

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite?"—Job 27:8.

I. *The Character of the Hypocrite.*
By a hypocrite we understand not a self-deceiver, but a deceiver of others. To himself his real character is known, as it is also to God, the Judge of all; but it is hid from his fellowmen, who are deceived by his plausible profession and fair speeches. The word implies that, like an ancient stage-player, he acts under a mask, and personates a character which does not properly belong to him. The mask he wears is a form of godliness, and the part he acts is that of a religious man. His religion is only a counterfeit. 1. The hypocrite is a person whose outward conduct, upon the whole, is irreproachable in the sight of men. 2. His true character is far from coming up to the requirements of the Gospel. He is one whose heart is not right with God. His heart is unchanged, unrenewed, unsanctified, destitute of faith and humility, and without the love and fear of God. 3. The hypocrite does all his works to be seen of men. It is not God that he seeks to please. Self is the idol which he worships, and to which his incense is burned. 4. The hypocrite is partial and formal in his obedience. His obedience has respect only to some of the Commandments. The principle by which he is actuated is earthly and grovelling, leading him to seek only to have glory of men. Such a man has no portion in the life to come; he has no treasure in heaven.

II. *The Nature of His Hope.*—Job takes for granted that the hypocrite may gain by his profession. He may, in many respects, succeed in obtaining the object of his wishes or the reward he covets. But what is his hope when God taketh away his soul?

Consider—1. The foundation on which his hope rests. 2. The author of his hope. Not God, but Satan. 3. The effects it produces. Then let us examine ourselves by this test. There are some who do not go so far even as the hypocrite. Even he pays some deference to religion. What character do we bear? Let us beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Avoid hypocrisy and cultivate sincerity. Be Christians, not merely in name, but in reality. Build your hope on Christ alone, counting Him to be your greatest gain.—D. Rees.

Self-Salvation.

"Then will I also confess unto thee, that thine own right hand can save thee."—Job 40:14.

When Job is strong enough to humble the proud he may be able to save himself; but as he cannot do the first work he is not equal to the second. Thus we are introduced to the impossibility of self-salvation.

I. *The Vain Attempt.* Men are continually trying to save themselves.

1. In danger. We feel that we need deliverance. Job desired to be saved from disease, poverty, injustice, cruelty. We all wish to escape from trouble. Some of us may be more anxious to escape from sin, our greatest enemy. There are evils, then, and the perception of them urges us to save ourselves.

2. In distrust. We ought to look to the Almighty for strength, and to the All-merciful for deliverance. But if we forget God we are tempted to rely on the arm of flesh. If we had a due appreciation of God's ability and willingness to save, we should not dream of trying to save ourselves.

3. In self-confidence. We must think little of our sin, or much of ourselves, if we imagine that we can

effect our own salvation. We have not yet discovered our own weakness, nor the depth of our fall, if we suppose that there is no greater mischief with us than what we can remedy.

II. *The Certain Failure.* No man has yet saved himself. Is it likely that the latest to try the experiment will succeed? We have not yet conquered our own hearts, although we have often determined to do so. Is it probable that our next attempt will be more successful? There are good grounds for being assured that it will not.

1. The greatness and power of sin. No one who has not tried to break its yoke knows how terrific this is. We simply cannot get away from our own sin. Not only does the sin harden into a habit and so become a second nature, but it weakens the moral fibre of the soul. The prisoner languishing in the dungeon is not only held in by stone walls and iron bars, but the unhealthy condition of his confinement weakens his body so that he has not strength to break away from even smaller constraints.

2. The justice of God. This does not hold us to our sin, but it binds us to its consequences. We cannot deny that we deserve the wrath of heaven. We cannot atone for sin. All our subsequent service is no more than is due from us, and the old debt still remains uncancelled.

III. *The Glorious Alternative.* We have to learn that we cannot save ourselves, not merely to discourage useless efforts, but to lead us to the true salvation of God. What we cannot do for ourselves God can and will do if we will let Him.

1. Through Jesus Christ. He was called Jesus because he would save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He is the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Christ delivers from sin as well as from its result—death. His power to save

springs from His atoning sacrifice; but He saved now as a living present Redeemer. He is the hand of God put forth to deliver the helpless and ruined.

2. In regeneration. We need to be born again (John 3:3). So great

a change cannot be brought about by ourselves; Christ alone can effect it. He has not come so much to bestow on us gifts as to change our whole life, so that we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).—W. F. Adeney.

PSALMS

The Royalty of the Son of God.

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."—Psalm 2:6.

I should question whether there could be produced from either sacred or profane literature a more remarkable instance of the power of putting a great deal into a few words than this Psalm. Its theme is "the *roy* of the Son of God." But that is not set forth in abstract sentences that would be crude. This is a great poem, and the theme is painted pictorially. There is not one picture, but four. They are different, yet all closely connected, and at the end are brought together into dramatic unity. The artistic balance is perfectly kept, the same number of words being given to each picture. There is no hurry or overcrowding. Every picture is painted broadly and freely, and even with a great deal of elaboration, and yet the whole Psalm only contains twelve verses. Look at the four pictures.

I. *Revolt*.—Painted in the first three verses. The nations crowded about the Holy Land have become restive under the yoke; a spirit of disaffection has spread. The movement has come to a head, and there has been effected an immense combination of insurgent states. The second verse takes us into the counciltent. At last they come to a unanimous resolution (ver. 3), "Let us break their bands asunder." That

was the form of the truth; but the truth itself is perfectly modern. It is the resistance of the world to the Gospel of Christ; it is the attempt of the persecutor and the traditionalist to arrest the progress of the kingdom of light and love; it is the natural enmity of your heart and mind to God and His Christ.

II. *Derision*.—At this point the poetic originality of this Psalm reaches its climax. This second scene is in heaven. Up in heaven there is seated One who is observing all this which is going on on earth. It is a very bold stroke of imagination to represent the Deity as laughing. It is not, however, unexampled. I want to say that we do not laugh enough; we do not sympathise enough with God's laughter; we take some things too seriously, we tremble too much for the ark of God. When some one begins vainly to give us his opinions about religion, of which he has no experience, we ought to see the ludicrous side of the matter; we should not become too angry about it.

III. *Interpretation*.—At this point the words of the poet become most pregnant and short-hand, so to speak. The scene is again changed. We are not in heaven now. Not among the insurgents, but in the opposite camp, because it is the Anointed, the Leader of the army, who is the speaker. He says, "I will declare the decree," and then He begins not to repeat it in the exact words, but to give the drift of it and its meaning both to it and to

them. "It means this," He says, "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Among the Hebrews the reigning sovereign was sometimes called God's son. No doubt all this referred originally to some Hebrew king and some crisis in his history. But beneath the words is a far more comprehensive reference to another. The reign of Christ is a reign of love. His kingdom is set up not upon the bodies, but in the hearts of men, and yet at the name of Jesus every knee must bow.

IV. Admonition.—Who is speaking now? Probably the poet himself. Like the chorus in a Greek play, He draws the moral of the whole. He urges the leaders of the insurgents to pause and be admonished. They can see themselves that this enterprise of theirs is hopeless, and that it may be fatal to themselves. Therefore it pleases them to kiss the Son, that is, to give Him the sign of allegiance. It should be, "for His wrath is kindled at a little." It is kindled by the affront shown to His Son; that He will always terribly avenge.—James Stalker.

Religion No Enemy to Joy.

"Thou hast put gladness in my heart."—Psalm 4:7.

Joy and pleasure are things so truly desired by all mankind, that religion suffers by being thought an enemy to them. Religion restrains us from nothing, but what our own reason and interest should restrain us from. In all harmless and innocent satisfactions, that neither intrench upon the honour of God, nor the rights of others, nor our own peace and quiet, we have leave to pick and choose.

I. The Nature of This Inward Joy and Pleasure.—Not a natural gaiety and cheerfulness of humour,

or a few light and transient fits of mirth, nor yet any strong and confident presumptions of God's love and favour, or any rapturous transports, and sensible ravishments of joy. That which I intend is, a solid and rational satisfaction of mind, in the goodness and soundness of a man's estate towards God, and flows usually from these two things—from a sincere and regular discharge of our duty, which brings its own comfort and tranquillity along with it. And from a cheerful reflection upon a man's innocency, and the integrity of his actions, when a man dares look back upon what he has done, and knows that he has the testimony and approbation of heaven on his side, bearing witness to the vote and suffrage of his own conscience.

II. What Influence Religion Has Upon the Joy and Pleasure of a Man's Mind.—1. Religion restores a man to the grace and favour of God, and assures him that his sins are pardoned, and his peace made with heaven. 2. A course of virtue and religion subdues our inordinate appetites and vicious inclinations, which are the great fountains of inquietude and trouble. Religion circulates through all our powers, disposes every faculty to act in its due place and order, and determines every affection to its peculiar object. 3. A pious and religious life secures to a man the peculiar care and protection of the Divine Providence, than which there cannot be a stronger support and comfort to the mind of a wise and good man. 4. Religion refreshes the mind of a good man with a joyful assurance of the glory and blessedness of the other world.

III. The Excellency of the Pleasures of Religion, above all the Delights and Pleasures of the World. "More than when the corn and the wine increases." 1. The delights of this world are gross and corporeal, and affect only the external senses,

and are the pleasures of the brute, rather than of the man. 2. The pleasures of religion are more solid and satisfying than anything this world can afford. They fill our appetites, and fix our desires, and settle the soul upon the right basis and temper. 3. Religious pleasures are more large and comprehensive, they take in a vaster compass, the delights both of this and of the other world. 4. The pleasures of religion have infinitely the advantage of all others in point of duration and continuance. They abide with us when other comforts fly, or are rifled away from us. The sum is this—"the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever."—William Cave.

The Unseen Avengers.

"Thy judgments are far above out of his sight."—Psalm 10: 5.

On the whole and in the rough, unquestionably sin in this world does not remain unavenged. This is true when society is looked at in the mass; yet in the history of individuals it is constantly found that no such obvious sequence of crime and punishment can be traced. There are plenty of cases in which offenders against the moral law have seemed to get off scot-free. It even almost appears at times as if they were specially favoured in the struggle for existence. Is there some hidden explanation of cases of this kind? The text says, "Thy judgments are far above." They are there, unerring in their action, unslumbering in their determination, but they are too great, too solemn and awful for the Psalmist's sin-dulled eyes to behold. God has many ways of avenging sin. It may in reality be far worse for a man when he is left for a long while to delight in his sins, when they grow round him and in him, like

some choking creeper, some deathly parasite that sucks out the vitality from that which it encircles, leaving at last only the mere semblance of life. Trace the action of these unseen avengers.

I. *After the Commission of Down-right, Unmistakable Sin.*—There are many sins of the flesh that ought to meet with open punishment from the Divine laws which they violate. Yet obviously ill deeds are often not so chastised. Take the case of secret drinking. There may be exposure. Or the habit grows more dominant. Even if its physical consequences are delayed, a degeneration of spiritual faculties sets in. It becomes increasingly difficult for such persons to see any goodness in their fellow-creatures. Tell me not that sin is unavenged when the whole character becomes deteriorated, when the will becomes paralysed, when all impulses for good are rendered impotent and sterile, when blindness has come upon the eyes to all that is fair and glorious and uplifting in the world.

II. *Take Another Instance, That of Hypocrisy.*—The Chadbands and Pecksniffs of humanity, the religious and moral humbugs of the world, how do they fare? Are they always discovered? Hypocrisy is of various degrees. It commences in the bud by timid fear of speaking the truth, and it ends in the full-blown flower of brazen dishonesty and imposture. In this necessary development it is ever finding its dreadful reward. Here, again, the sinner may be unable to understand the doom which has fallen upon him. It is supposed that in past generations the blind fishes of subterranean lakes in America found their organs of sight not required, so nature dropped them out. They may be happy in their blindness, but who would exchange conditions with them? We cannot be untrue to what we know to be right without bringing upon ourselves a like Nemesis. The

inevitable punishment of doing a false action is the increased difficulty of either doing or seeing what is true.

III. *Worldliness*.—For the most part the consequences are obvious enough of devotion to the fancies and fashions of a luxurious, indolent society. Folk become weary and jaded. The upper-class world has, too, its seamy side. There are not often open exposures. The decorum of advancing age smooths over everything. In those cynical words, "We are all respectable after seventy." The wrong is not done with when forgotten. What if the fires of passion and emulation are only banked in temporarily by the worn-out crust of mortality? They may be ready to flare up in another world. Anyway, their effects ever remain. All that might have been—all wasted, misused, handed over to the powers of evil! How terrible would these pitiable failures show if seen by eyes purged to discover things in their true reality! Worse thought still, may not this deplorable vision of life's wasted opportunities be forced, branded upon the soul for ever hereafter?—G. Gardner.

Secret Faults.

"*Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*"—Psalm 19:12.

Undiscovered sins. The Psalmist is thinking that, beyond the range of conscience and consciousness, there are evils in us all.

I. *In Every Man Are Sins of Which the Doer Is Unaware*.—Few of us are familiar with our own appearance. Our portraits surprise us. The bulk of good men do not know themselves. Evil has the strange power of deceiving us, and hiding from us our acts' real character. Conscience is loudest where it is least needed, and most silent where most required. Conscience wants educating. We

bribe our consciences as well as neglect them. Down below every life there lies a great dim region of habits and impulses and fleeting emotions, into which it is the rarest thing for a man to go with a candle in his hand, to see what it is like. Ignorance diminishes criminality, but ignorance does not alter the nature of a deed.

II. *The Special Perilousness of Hidden Faults*.—As with a blight upon a rose-tree, the little green creatures lurk on the under side of the leaves, and in all the folds of the buds, and, because unseen, they increase with alarming rapidity. The very fact that we have faults in our characters, which everybody sees but ourselves, makes it certain that they will grow unchecked, and so will prove terribly perilous. Those secret faults are like a fungus that has grown in a wine cask; whose presence nobody suspected. It sucks up all the generous liquor to feed its own filthiness, and when the staves are broken there is no wine left, nothing but the foul growth. Many a Christian man and woman has the whole Christian life arrested, and all but annihilated, by the unsuspected influence of a secret sin.

III. *The Discipline, or Practical Issues, to which such Considerations Should Lead*.—1. They ought to take down our self-complacency, if we have any. It should give us a low estimate of ourselves. 2. It should lead us to practise rigid self-inspection. 3. We should diminish as much as possible the merely mechanical and instinctive part of our lives. The less we live by impulse the better. A man's best means of knowing what he is is to take stock of what he does. If you will put your conduct through the sieve you will come to a pretty good understanding of your own character. 4. One of the surest ways of making conscience more sensitive is always to consult it, and al-

ways to obey it. If you neglect it, and let it prophesy to the wind, it will stop speaking before long. 5. Compare yourselves constantly with your model. Do as the art-students do in a gallery—take your poor daub right into the presence of the masterpiece, and go over it, line by line and tint by tint. Get near Jesus Christ, that you may learn duty from Him, and you will find out many of the secret sins. 6. Ask God to cleanse us. Revised Version has, "*Clear thou me from secret faults.*" And there is present in the word, if not exclusively, yet at least predominantly, the idea of a judicial acquittal. So we may be sure that, though our eye does not go down there into the dark depths, God's eye goes; and that where He looks He looks to pardon, if we come to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord—Ian Maclaren.

Self-Ignorance.

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—Psalm 19: 12.

It is no supposition, but an unquestionable fact, that to not a few of us, from the first moment of existence, there has been present, not beneath the roof but within the breast, a mysterious resident, an inseparable companion, nearer to us than friend or brother, yet of whom, after all, we know little or nothing. Many are the reasons why we should be acquainted with our moral nature. Other portions of self-knowledge we may with comparative harmlessness neglect, but to neglect this is full of peril. And we can never depute the work to another. Unnoticed error in the heart, unlike intellectual deficiencies, not merely affects our temporal condition or our social reputation, but may issue in our eternal ruin. Yet a man's moral defects are most likely to elude his own scrutiny. There is

a peculiar secrecy, an inherent inscrutability, about our sins. It is the peculiar characteristic of moral disease, that it does its deadly work in secret. Sin is a malady which affects the very organ by which itself is detected. One reason why the sinful man does not understand his errors is—

I. *That Sin Can Be Truly Measured Only When It Is Resisted.*—So long as evil reigns unopposed within it will reign in a great degree unobserved. Resistance is the best measure of force. Sin's power is revealed only in the act of resistance. When the softening principle of Divine love and grace begins to thaw the icy coldness of a godless heart, then it is that the soul becomes aware of the deadly strength of sin. Then comes the feeling of an hitherto unrealised burden.

II. *Sin Often Makes a Man Afraid to Know Himself.*—A man often has a latent misgiving that all is not right with his soul, yet, fearing to know the whole truth, he will inquire no further. Most men prefer the delicious tranquillity of ignorance to the wholesome pains of a self-revelation. Easily alarmed in other cases, men become strangely incurious here. With many, life is but a continuous endeavour to forget and keep out of sight their true selves.

III. *The Slow and Gradual Way* in which, in most cases, sinful habits and dispositions are acquired.—There is something in the mere fact of the gradual and insidious way in which changes of character generally take place that tends to blind men to their own defects. Every one knows how unconscious we often are of changes that occur by minute and slow degrees, as in the case of the seasons. How imperceptibly life's advancing stages steal upon us! Analogous changes equally unnoticed, because equally slow and gradual, may be occurring in our moral nature, in the state of our souls before God.

Character is a thing of slow formation. Each day helps to mould it. In a thousand insignificant sacrifices of principle to passion, of duty to inclination, a man's moral being has been fashioned into the shape it wears.

IV. As *Character Gradually Deteriorates*, there is a parallel deterioration of the standard by which we judge it.—As sin grows, conscience declines in vigour, and partakes of the general injury which sin inflicts on the soul. Sin, in many of its forms, has an ugly look at first, but its repulsiveness rapidly wears off by familiarity. The danger of self-ignorance is not less than its guilt. Of all evils a secret evil is most to be deprecated—of all enemies a concealed enemy is the worst. However alarming, however distressing self-knowledge may be, better that than the tremendous evils of self-ignorance.—Principal Caird.

The Sin of Self-Confidence.

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be perfect, and I shall be clear from great transgression."—Psalm 19: 13.

Our purpose is to point out that life does not admit of negligence, self-confidence, and venturesomeness; and to urge a close and constant supervision of the soul.

I. *To Treat Negligently Our Secret Faults* is to become guilty of presumptuous sin. Immediately before our text we listen to the depreciation and appeal, "Who can discern His errors? Clear Thou me from hidden faults." Now, by these errors and secret faults we understand the Psalmist to indicate the thought, feeling, and bias which lie back of action, and eventually determine action. In the meditation of the heart, the chambers of the brain, the inclination of the

will, action takes its rise and colour; and at this initial point, in the count of the sacred writer, we ought specially to be on our guard. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and this fountain ought to be kept under constant observation, as the inhabitants of volcanic areas watch the movement and colour of the water in the wells. According to the reasoning of the text and context, out of hidden faults spring presumptuous sins, out of presumptuous sins dominant sins, out of dominant sins the great transgression of final apostasy. Medical authority teaches that elephantiasis is sometimes occasioned by the bite of a mosquito; and the student of morals well knows that, as the most monstrous physical maladies arise in microscopic life, so the foulest sins originate in obscure errors of the mind, in distempered imaginations, in morbid feeling, in a bias of the will so faint as easily to escape notice. As St. James diagnoses the situation, each man is tempted when drawn away by his irregular desire, and enticed; then, the irregular desire having conceived, beareth sin; and sin, becoming full grown, brings forth death. The point of the Psalmist, then, is this—that so soon as we discern in thought, emotion, or conduct any thing irregular, false, unhealthy, we ought promptly to take ourselves to task.

II. *To Despise the Beginnings of Habit* is to become chargeable with presumptuous sin. The Psalmist has here in view the terrible power of evil habit. "Let them not have dominion over me." St. Paul refers to the same hateful domination: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof." The ancients were only too familiar with tyranny, with its humiliations and cruelty; but they knew no despotism that was so terrible as that of a soul mastered by base desire: the tyranny that outrages reason, puts out the eyes of the heart, silences

the conscience, fastens fetters on the will, and thrusts human nature in its inmost self into the bitterest bondage and degradation. To acquiesce in the lordship of lust, or to attempt in unavailing revolt to break its fetters is the deepest depth of subjection and misery we may know. Let us not be guilty of presumptuous sin in yielding to the temerity which trifles with the beginnings of evil. The crease may be barely discernible, but there character will be rent; the scratch may be inappreciable, but here the soul will be shattered, and, perchance, cast with the rubbish to the void! Snap, then, the spider-thread ere it become a cord of vanity, a cart-rope to drag the tyrant's chariot and the executioner's tumbril. Block the track ere the lawless thought establish a right of way. Quench the kindling spark ere you perish in the impure flame of an infernal martyrdom. "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

III. To Expose Ourselves Unnecessarily to Temptation is an egregious form of presumption. We have already spoken of those wanton persons who are never happy except when courting danger in some shape or other; and this folly finds its parallel in the spiritual life. Surely temptation enough arises out of natural, legitimate life, inevitable dangers stand thick through all the ground; and yet we madly multiply peril to the soul, as the harebrained will graze the grave. How rashly we expose ourselves to sceptical influences! How heedlessly we take on worldly entanglements! How apt we are to minimize the perils of passion, feeding without fear! To dabble with any forbidden thing in the moral life is inexcusable folly; for it does not, and it cannot, bring any advantage whatever. The wounds received in the service of sin carry no honour; the ventures made at the bidding of

vicious caprice yield no profit; the forbidden precipices we climb with bleeding feet only render our folly the more conspicuous and our punishment the more complete. "What fruit then had ye at that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death."

IV. To Encounter the Inevitable Perils of life without due preparation is a sin of presumption. Nothing in nature is more remarkable than the way in which the creatures are fortified against their enemies; and it is noted that their defensive armour becomes more exquisite and complete as their assailants increase in power and efficiency. Cacti are preserved by formidable spines. Protective mechanics of a most complicated order are found in a number of plants. All kinds of ingenious weapons are developed by flower, insect, and animal; just the armour that best suits them, being finely adjusted to the severity of their environment. Thus God has not left His people without a "whole armour"; it would be strangely unlike Him if He had. And that armour is found in the intensity and fulness of their spiritual life. The armour of the saint is not something exterior and artificial: it is the protection that springs from the reality, intensity, and healthiness of the life of the soul. It is in the grasp of the truth by the understanding, in the sensibility of the conscience to righteousness, in the warmth of the heart's love, in the clearness of the vision of the eternal, in the strength of our trust in God, and in the completeness of our consecration to Him. Here is the invulnerable panoply of the saints.—W. L. Watkinson.

Freedom from Fear.

"Whom shall I fear?"—Psalm 27:1.

This is not the language of vain presumption, or the boastful utterance

of affected boldness, but the confident, yet humble, utterance of Christian assurance.

I. *Shall We Be Afraid of God?*—1. Is He not revealed as a sin-hating God? And are not all men sinners? How comes it, then, that the Christian man, though sensible of many infirmities, shortcomings, and aggravated sins—sins of thought, of word, and of deed—can say that he has no cause to be afraid of God? It is because of the new relation into which he is brought to God by virtue of his union to Christ, and of what Christ has done for him. The work of Christ was to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God. Nor is this all. Every believer in Christ becomes a partaker of the Divine nature, sustaining a relation to him near and dear as that which His own Son sustained. 2. Is not the Christian exposed to temptation? May he not be stripped of the safeguard which Divine grace has thrown around him, and be exposed again to the dread vengeance of an insulted God? No; though he may fall, yet shall he rise again. So long as he is Christ's he has nothing to fear from God, but everything to hope. The love of God dwelling in him, there is no place for fear, for "perfect love casteth out fear."

II. *Shall We Fear the Law?*—*"Cursed is every one that continueth not," etc. "He that offendeth in one point," etc.* If a man's life is to be brought to the test of the law, if he is to stand on the footing of his own merits in the eye of the law, then, indeed, is his condition hopeless, for "there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Now though all this be true, it is no less true that even of the law the Christian has no need to be afraid. To him it is invested with no terrors, on him it never flashes its lightning, against

him it never peals its thunders, and why? Why, just because "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and of death." Why? Because "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

III. *Shall We Fear Satan?*—When we think of the life he has led us, the misery in which he has involved us, the grinding nature of that servitude he exacts from every one who is led captive by him at his will, we may well tremble at the thought of such an enemy, for unless we are ransomed from his hands by a mightier power than our own, well may we say that he is indeed a power to be feared. But it is only when under his power that this can truly be said of him. It cannot be so said of the believer, for his position is altered to Satan, and Satan's is altered to him. Christ "has taken the prey from the mighty, and spoiled the captive of the terrible one."

IV. *Shall We Fear Affliction?*—To fear it would be to mistrust the promises, and to doubt the faithfulness of Him by whom these promises are made. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," etc.

V. *Shall We Fear Death?*—Death, which the world calls "the king of terrors," and which wicked men feel to be such! Death, which for six thousand years has lorded it over the human race, and to whose sceptre countless myriads are yet destined to bow! Shall we not be afraid of death? No! To the Christian there is nothing in death to make him afraid. To the Christian all his power is over the material, not over the spiritual; over the body, not over the soul; and even over the body not long. To the Christian he comes as

an angel of mercy, as a messenger of peace.—H. Hyslop.

Help from the Sanctuary.

"Send thee help from the sanctuary."—Psalm 20:2.

The name *sanctuary* means the holy place, and sometimes refers only to that which was the most holy place, but at other times to the tabernacle generally. It was made holy by God's dwelling there, and specially by the manifestation of His grace through mediation and sacrifice. To the *sanctuary* the pious Israelites turned when in trouble and in great emergency, specially besought the Divine protection by clinging to the horns of the altar. Something of the same kind we find in medieval Christian times in connection with particular churches. In the Chapter House of Westminster there is a beautiful picture depicting a scene which was often witnessed at the abbey porch. The venerable abbot, with the elevated host in his hand, is staying the progress of a strong angry warrior, while behind him a woman and her children, with terror in their faces, are clinging to his vestments and claiming his protection. But we take the word *sanctuary* as in its common meaning amongst us to-day; as the house of God, the place of worship. Help from the *sanctuary*, therefore, suggests the spiritual strength obtained through the observances of the religious ordinances connected with the day and the house of the Lord. Christ blesses us through them. They are no charms or talismans, but simply channels of His blessing.

I. *We All Need Help.*—Every soul has its own sadness, some spiritual, through the conflict with sin, others temporal, through the difficulties of life.

II. It is a comfort to know that

There Is Help from the Sanctuary.—For in the *sanctuary* we draw near to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we appropriate Him to ourselves as our own God we find ourselves strengthened and encouraged. We are in our lives like a schoolboy learning to write, and every week is a page in our copy-book, and every day a line. On the first line, and in the *sanctuary*, Christ has set before us His own beautiful example, and we start out to imitate it. But as we go down line after line we too largely lose sight of that which He has written, and when we get to the bottom our work is all irregular and blotted, and the paper, mayhap, also blistered with our tears. Then comes the first day of the week again, and when we enter into the *sanctuary* Jesus speaks to us words of cheer and sets us a new copy, and so we begin again. Thus page after page is covered. It is poor work enough, but it improves a little every time, and it is much better at the end of the book than it was at the beginning, for at the bottom of the last page the Master writes, "Well done!" Thus the *sanctuary* counteracts the evil influences of the week. And there have been special blessings coming to earnest Christians through some particular portion of the service of God's house. The Lord guides His Word to the hearts of His people. He knows how to direct the minister to preach aright. See how minute are the directions given by which Cornelius was to find Peter and Ananias to find Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. And the Holy Spirit acts in like manner still.

III. *To Get this Help We Must Come to the Sanctuary.*—I do not deny that we can get to God in Christ anywhere. But a particular promise is made in connection with the *sanctuary*. "Where two or three," &c. It may be difficult to analyse this special blessing, but it is a reality. How

lamentable, then, that so many stay away, and on such slight pretexts.

IV. If He would be the means of conveying this help the minister must *Keep Close to Christ*.—For it is the Christ of the sanctuary that constitutes its value, and if he, on whom most of all the character and quality of the services depend, loses sight of Him, then the Church is reduced at once to the level of the Lyceum, and all spiritual power is gone. The soul of a saint cannot be nourished by a scientific disquisition. The best way to defend the truth is to expound it. Above all, must they know Christ experimentally.—W. M. Taylor.

Sin Forgiven.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."—
Psalm 32:1.

I. *The Burden*.—1. He uses three words, and each word reveals a different aspect of his comprehensive conception. (1) He calls it his "transgression." The word is significant of a "breaking-loose." The figure is almost that of a horse that has broken the traces and is bolting. The cords have been snapped. The yoke has been thrown aside. The man conceives himself as in revolt. He is a rebel, a deserter. He has broken the bands; he has discarded all discipline, and has roamed in ways of unconsidered licence. (2) He also calls it his "sin." He has deflected from the prescribed line of life. He has chosen his own end. He has missed the mark. His life "has not arrived." It is characterised by failure. (3) He also calls it his "iniquity." His life is marred by crookedness and deformity. Guilt has sunk into his faculties, and all of them have been twisted in a certain perversity. Such is the man's vivid consciousness of his own

estate. He is a rebel of perverse inclinations, and wrenched by self-will into spiritual deformity. 2. Now, concerning this burning consciousness of personal sin, we are told the man "kept silence." He invited no fellowship, either on the part of man or of God. How did such secret, silent burden affect the man's life? (1) "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." There is a wonderful intimacy between the flesh and the spirit. To sap the forces of the one drains the energy of the other. This man, with the secret, unspoken consciousness of sin, dragged along a weary body. He was continually tired. (2) "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." He moved in a condition of constant depression. He felt that "the hand of the Lord" was weighing upon him! That is a pathetic word. "The hand of the Lord" is usually a minister of succour, of lifting, of resurrection! But here the "hand of the Lord" is regarded as the minister of depression, and the man is held down in mental flatness and imprisonment. (3) "My moisture is turned into drought of summer." He was the victim of a dry, fierce heat! No cool, cooling influences breathed through his soul. He was "heated hot with burning fears."

II. *The Confession*.—The Psalmist had a threefold description of sin, now he has a threefold description of its confession. "I acknowledged my sin." "Mine iniquity have I not hid." "I confessed my transgressions." The marrow of all these pregnant phrases is that the Psalmist made a clean breast of it. He hid nothing from the Lord. There was no unclean thing concealed within his tent. He opened out every secret room. He gave God all the keys. Everything was brought out and penitently acknowledged. He confessed in particulars, and not in generals. He "poured out his heart before God."

He emptied it as though he was emptying a vessel in which no single unclean drop was allowed to remain. His confession was made in perfect frankness and sincerity.

III. *The Lord's Response.*—1. His transgression was "forgiven"—lifted and carried away out of sight. 2. His sin was "covered." "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." Grace rolls over like an immeasurable flood, and our sins are submerged beneath its mighty depths. 3. His iniquity was "not imputed." Forgiven sins are never to be counted; they will not enter into the reckoning. They will not influence the Lord's regard for us. In His love for us, forgiven sins are as though they had never been. Here, then, is the completeness of the freedom of the children of God. Sin forgiven! Sin covered! Sin no longer reckoned! It is not wonderful that this once tried, depressed, feverish soul, tasting now the delights of a gracious freedom, should cry out, "Blessed is the man!"—J. H. Jowett.

Sins of Scripture Saints.

"I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid."—
Psalm 32:5.

David was far from being a character of spotless purity. So greatly indeed was his life disgraced by bloodshed and by sin that the same God who chose him to reign over Israel refused to receive from his hands the dedication of his intended Temple.

I. It is not our duty to attempt to excuse or palliate crimes like those of David, or of any other person mentioned in Holy Writ. We should confess that there is scarcely a Scripture character without a stain—nor need we be at any pains to excuse this fact. We should, indeed, give the

same justice to them that we do to others, but there is nothing in the Bible requiring us to regard sin differently or as less aggravated—whether seen in a Prophet, Minister, Christian, or Infidel.

II. Suppose that the believers mentioned in Scripture had all been represented as faultless, would the Bible have been any more credible? Here in the world we see, as a rule, good men overcoming their sins. At times, however, they may have been overcome by them—and if we turn to the Bible we find just such characters drawn there. Every one must feel that the Scriptures are, therefore, much more credible when they describe believers as but imperfectly sanctified than they would have been had they represented them as perfect.

III. Admitting the guilt of those Scripture Saints, we should observe the severity of God's justice against them. In the ordinary course of things their crimes would have been in a great measure concealed had not God displayed them. Does not this show God's confidence in truth? Nor let it be supposed that those sins were passed over without punishment. So far was it otherwise that, in David's case, even when the pardon of his soul was pronounced, yet heavy were the inflictions laid upon him. Let none then make the example of illustrious men of old, as mentioned in Scripture, encouragements or excuses to sin, when we see, as in David's case, how severely these sins were punished.—E. J. Brewster.

Confession of Sin.

"I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid."—
Psalm 32:5.

Let men argue as they please against the Bible; they cannot deny or alter the fact that this book has a power

of laying hold on the heart and conscience, unrivalled and unique. One reason is its penetrating knowledge of human nature; another, its deep and wide sympathy. Our interest is quickened, sympathy roused, because we are presented, not with abstract truth, dry dogma, but with living experience. Conscience can be impartial, judgment cool, because it is another's case, not our own, we contemplate. Suddenly, when we thought we were looking at a picture, we find it is a mirror. The still small voice says, "Thou art the man!"

I. A Burdened Spirit Hiding Itself Behind Dumb Lips.—David "kept silence"—would not acknowledge his sins even to himself, therefore, of course, not to God. Forget them, he could not. But (we may assume) he excused them—laid the blame (as we so easily do) on temptation and circumstance and nature. Besides, was a king to be bound within as strict limits as an ordinary person? Had not his blackest crime—the murder of his brave, faithful general—been in a manner forced on him? He "kept silence" before others—perhaps was specially exemplary in public worship and pious ceremony; "kept silence" before God—perhaps kept up rigidly the form of prayer, but, though his lips prayed, his heart was dumb. Wonderful is the deceitfulness of sin; the self-ignorance into which it betrays us (James 1:14, 15).

II. The Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit Pouring Out Its Penitent Confession to God.—As long as David "kept silence," the Lord had a controversy with him. His "hand was heavy," possibly in some stroke of sickness; perhaps only in the bodily disorder which springs from mental suffering. The ghastly secret refused to be buried in silence and oblivion. The burden grew intolerable. At last he said, "I will confess my transgressions." 1. *To his own conscience.* "The first step is the hardest"; and

perhaps the hardest thing in frank confession is to acknowledge sin to one's self. It is easy to say, "We have erred and strayed," when everybody else says so; quite another thing to say, in the lonely silence of your own thought, "I am wrong." No one likes that. No one *ought* to like it. But it has to be done, or confession to God—or to man—is a vain form. 2. *What next?* The carrying out of the purpose; the soul alone with God, saying, "Father, I have sinned!" Many a man blames himself inwardly, bitterly, proudly; but it leads to nothing. He does not acknowledge his sin to God. Here are three words which give three views of sin. (1) *Sin.* The Hebrew word properly means "error," "failure," "missing the mark." (2) *Iniquity:* perverseness, depravity, with the added idea of guilt: "The iniquity (or, 'guilt') of my sin." 3. *Transgression:* breaking away, viz., from obedience to God's Law; rebellion. (In vers. 1, 2 same words in different order.)

III. The Immediate Relief and Infinite Comfort Found in Turning to God.—The guilty silence is broken. The veil of self-delusion is rent off. The sinner takes his right attitude, his true position before God. Not the same as though he had not sinned—that is impossible; but that which belongs to him in fact. There is a dawn of comfort in this. At least we have done with falsehood, come on to the firm ground of truth. But the only real comfort is, not in our penitence, but in God's promises. Confession and repentance do not lay the ground for forgiveness, or of the hope and certainty of it. God has laid that (2 Cor. 5:19-21). The name of God is significant here: not "God" the Almighty Creator, but "the Lord," i.e., Jehovah—God's covenant name with Israel. Nature holds out no inducement to confess sin, no hope of pardon. Its law is, "Reap what you have sown." If the ground of ac-

ceptance were our repentance, we never could be assured that it was adequate. But God's faithfulness and justice are pledged to grant what His love has already provided in the gift of His Son (1 John 1:9). Confession is just the breaking down of the barrier raised, not by our sin, but by impenitence and unbelief; at once the stream of Divine mercy flows unhindered, "Thou forgavest," etc.

Conclusion:—This experience was too exemplary, too instructive, too precious, to be permitted to perish in forgetfulness. The Holy Spirit (as we said) does not merely paint a picture, but holds up a mirror. David's experience may be ours.—E. R. Conder.

Confession.

"I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—Psalm 32: 5.

It is hard to look things in the face; yet we must do so; we must own our sins honestly.

I. *To Our Own Hearts*—and then, down comes our pride. We thought ourselves tolerably good, and that we could pass muster as well as most; but beginning to look, we detect, here first, and then there, a blemish, an infirmity, a gross sin. It is best to be frank, and rather to make the most than the least of our faults. The iron-founder examines the huge mass of some iron girder, on which he has spent much labour; he sees one tiny crack, but passes it by, hoping, though with strong misgiving, that the real strength of the metal will not be affected; and ere long he hears that the bridge has fallen, and men have been killed by it, and that the disaster is traced to a flaw in his metal. He had better have faced the disappointment, and have had the piece recast

than have been responsible for the accident.

II. *To Others.*—When a man knows his own fault, he does not like others to know it: he would prefer to remain in their eyes the spotless man he once was in his own. It is a degrading thought that others should know that you have been guilty of a meanness, of intemperance, of passion, of untruthfulness; and yet by trying to conceal it from them you may be adding deception to your former error. Not that we are bound to blaze abroad our faults; that might do more harm than good: but to cover them, or palliate them, so as to retain the good opinion of others is fruitless and insincere. Bitter though it be to lose the good opinion of friends, still even that is better than disingenuousness.

III. *To God.*—It is God whom we have offended: to God must our confession be made. With abject sorrow and unfeigned shame that we should in any, the least, point have outraged the majesty, the purity, the honour of God; with body, soul, and spirit all bowed down; with reason silent, with no excuses, no special pleading, no attempt to set off against our faults any good things which we have done; but simply engrossed in our hatred of the evil thing we have done, and unreservedly acknowledging its wickedness.

IV. If you cannot quiet your conscience by secret confession to God, use the *Ministry of Reconciliation*. Something human the man craves, some human voice to tell him to his face that he is forgiven, to assure him, and to dispel his doubts.—G. F. Prescott.

The Divine Coercion of Evil.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."—Psalm 76: 10.

Let us note for our consolation and encouragement the two precious truths expressed by the text—the Divine restraint of evil and the Divine compulsion of evil to issues of good and blessing. For, whatever the variations in the interpretation of the original by the great scholars, this is substantially the significance of the passage before us.

I. *The Divine Restraint of Evil.*—“The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” The mighty army of Sennacherib, splendidly equipped, full of fury and confidence, suddenly and mysteriously melted away under the power of Jehovah, leaving Jerusalem intact and joyful; and the permanent significance of this event is, that no weapon formed against the kingdom of God shall finally prosper, that every conspiracy in a critical hour shall be brought to nought.

1. In nature we see abounding examples of the fact that limits are fixed to the destructive forces, limits they may not transgress. There is a benign law, a delicately poised balance, a sovereign virtue, an antiseptic quality, in the very constitution of things, which keeps the destructive elements within bounds and preserves the world a theatre of life, sweetness, health, and beauty. And as the snake is in the grass, the hawk in the sky, the poison-plant in the woods, so the octopus, alligator and shark infest the waters; yet the protective law operates there also, sheltering whatsoever passeth through the depths of the seas.

Evil is full of boasting; it is insolent, mocking, rampant, apparently irresistible; it threatens to occupy the whole sphere—annihilating all that is good, soiling whatever is beautiful, quenching in darkness whatever is joyous; yet somehow it breaks off unaccountably where and when we did not expect it to break off, not having wrought nearly the mischief that seemed inevitable. “Fear ye not me?

saihth the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence which has placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and, though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?”

2. If in nature these grievous limits are imposed on the genius of destruction, let us be assured that stern circumscriptions restrain moral evil and render impossible its triumph.

II. *The Divine Compulsion of Evil.*—“Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee.” Not merely restrained, but coerced to most desirable issues. Not only is Zion saved from evil, she is served by it. The peoples of the earth, the estranged heathen peoples, through their defeats and humiliations, are to attain to true insight and reverence. The most furious and the most enraged are to come to the thankful acknowledgment of God. Such is the significance of the closing strophe of this Psalm. The rage of kings and peoples is overruled to the glory of the Church of God and to the ultimate salvation of the revolters.

Let us, however, be clear as to what is exactly meant by evil working good. We must remember that evil is evil, not good in the making, not undeveloped good. Essential evil is the deliberate contradiction of the Divine will, the positive violation of the Divine law, programme, design, the clash of God’s will and the creature’s. And, secondly, that good is never brought out of evil—that is impossible. When it is affirmed that evil works for good, we mean that God so antagonises wicked men, vile institutions, and malign movements, that in the final result they develop the good they threaten to destroy. The selfishness, pride, and licence of the world are made to work its purification.

Let us not be overpowered by the vision of the power of evil. What-

ever is done against us in our personal life by the injustice of men or the maliciousness of demons shall, whilst we remain faithful, work for our final gain. What is the moral of the book of Job but the subordination of alien wrath to the profit of the saint? From a great fight of unmerited affliction we see the patriarch emerge more rich and powerful than when the storm burst upon him, and with a deepened experience that must have given to his restored prosperity tenfold interest and satisfaction. The government of God extorted from the malice of hell splendid spoils in which Job was arrayed. So now with every loyal child of God. "All things work together for good to them that love God."—W. L. Watkinson.

Mightiness of Redemption.

"Stir up thy strength, and come and help us."—Psalm 80:2.

The greatest of all helps to realise the magnitude of redemption is the experimental sense, the unwrought consciousness of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." Take this for an axiom. He thinks lightly of the greatness of redemption who thinks lightly of the power of sin. He regards Jesus as a superfluous helper who regards Satan as a contemptible foe. The two spiritual conceptions are co-equal, correlative. It is when like David we cry out, "Innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up," that like David, also, we stretch out our hands to our mighty Succourer and feel the force of the prayer which may often have passed our lips before, "O Lord, let it be Thy pleasure to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me. Thou are my Helper and Redeemer; make no long tarrying, O my God."

I. *I Refuse to Limit the Great Work of Redemption to What Is Called, in the Language of Popular Theology, "the Saving of the Soul."* Wherever sin in its remotest consequences has reached, there Christ's work reaches also. We do a fatal injury, as it seems to me, to the work of redemption, as a practical human idea, when we disconnect it, as some are fond of doing, from the temporal and even the material interests of mankind. It is my full belief that the Cross of Christ has done, proportionately to the matter on which it works, as much for us in this world as it will do in the next. The "Kingdom of Heaven" in the idea of its great founder began with St. John's baptism—runs its first course in this lower world—throws its light on "life" as well as on immortality. For the law of the kingdom of God is progress—development—of the species, speaking generally; and of the individual too where it has free course and is not frustrated. It works more effectually in the nobler parts of our nature; in the spirit than in the soul; in the soul than in the body. But there is nothing in human nature that is too high to need it, too low to be susceptible of its influence. Even "our vile bodies" are to be changed into the "likeness of Christ's glorious body" according to the working whereby He "is able to subdue all things unto Himself." The fulness of spiritual discernment—the great gift of heaven first; sanctification, that which now worketh in us mightily, next; but "the redemption of the body" also has its place in the scale of regeneration, though the quickening spirit of the last Adam has not yet swallowed up death in the completeness of His victory.

II. *It Is No Reflection on the Divine Power That in This or That Instance It May Seem to Us to Have Failed in Its Purpose or to Have Wrought Out Its End by Imperfect*

or Even Evil Agencies. For to us is committed the scarcely less wonderful power of antagonism; we worms of the earth can frustrate as regards ourselves—ay, and as regards others—"the grace of God." It is the inexplicable mystery of human free will, concurrent with Divine omnipotence. And if the treachery of a Judas, or the malice of a Caiaphas, or the moral weakness of a Pilate, or the fickleness of an ignorant crowd, were really agencies in the salvation of the world, what can we do but admire the resources of that omnipotence which by a Divine alchemy can transmute human evil into human good and vindicate its sovereignty even by submitting to the use of base instrumentalities, and, like the light of the blessed sun, can pass through the foulest media, clouded perhaps, and robbed of some of its brightness, but yet uncontaminated and undefiled.—J. Fraser.

Secret Sins.

"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance."—Psalm 90:8.

Nothing perishes. Nothing is forgotten. Things lost to us are found elsewhere. Things that seem to perish do but pass into new forms. The bursting bubble, the smoke scattered by the wind, the fallen leaf trampled into the mire, vanish from our sight and sense; but the atoms of which that puff of smoke is made are as old as the world, and will endure while the world endures. The image of that bubble, with its lovely colours, most lovely just before it bursts, may remain in our memory, or may exercise the thought of scientific minds for years. The bud which the perished leaf nourished may grow into a bough that will be green when generations have passed; and the dust into which the dead leaf moulders

may feed new life. How much more in the spiritual realm? The acted deed, the spoken word, the conscious thought, may seem to perish the instant it comes to birth. Memory may blot it that moment from her tablet. But it is indestructible. It survives in its results. There is a memory in which nothing ever fades; an eye nothing is quick enough to escape or baffle; a light from which no secret thing is hid. "Thou hast set," etc.

I. *Sin Naturally Seeks Concealment.* The first impulse of the first sinners—very foolish, but very natural—was to hide themselves from God (Gen. 3:8-10). Some sins those who commit them are anxious to hide from human knowledge. Shame is the natural attendant of consciousness of wrongdoing. Only the most hardened and debased "glory in their shame." Other sins, through self-ignorance, self-deceit, carelessness, or dulness of conscience, are a secret from the sinner himself (Ps. 19:12). Some sins—e.g., fraud of all kinds—are possible only by concealment. Self-interest, not shame merely, prompts secrecy. So subtle is sin that it often disguises itself as virtue. Covetousness poses as prudence, spite as candour, pride as a delicate sense of honour, obstinate ill temper as honest independence, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, as zeal for truth and for God. Even the sincerest Christian has cause to pray, "Who can understand," etc.? (Ps. 19:12).

II. *No Sin Is Hidden from God.* An appalling contrast! What darker hiding-place conceivable than the secret, silent depth of the heart? But not only is it transparent to God's view (Ps. 139:1, 12), he brings our secrets to light in the full blaze of omniscience. Elsewhere the "light of God's countenance" means his favour, the sunshine of his lovingkindness. But that is a different word in Hebrew; the one used here means not mere sunshine, but the sun (Gen.

1: 14-16). God's knowledge of men's sins is such as is possible to God alone; he knows each sin in its motives, its exact magnitude, its issues in the sinner himself and towards others, its desert. Yet this tremendous thought has its side of comfort. "He knoweth our frame" (Ps. 103: 14)—our weakness, ignorance, temptations. His justice excludes harshness. He "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."

III. This Knowledge Is Not to be Kept Secret. It is to be published to the universe (Eccles. 12: 14). The frequent detection and punishment of the most carefully concealed crimes is a faint anticipation of "the day" (Acts 17: 13; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 2: 23).

IV. Sin cannot be hidden; but it can be "covered" (Ps. 32: 1; 85: 2). It can be "blotted out" (Isa. 43: 25; Acts 2: 19), "washed" (Ps. 51: 2; 1 Cor. 6: 11; Rev. 7: 14). Only he who knows our sins could forgive or atone (Rom. 5: 8).—E. R. Conder.

Forgiveness Mingled with Judgment.

"Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."—Psalm 99: 8.

Mercy and judgment must be harmonised. A magnanimous pardon worthy of God's Fatherhood and a scrupulous honour for law worthy of the Judge of all worlds must meet together in God's providential government. We sometimes assume that forgiveness and judgment exclude each other, and that the climax of clemency is to release from pain rather than to produce sympathy with righteousness. But that is unscriptural and untrue. The forgiven suffer sometimes even beyond the average lot of their fellows. Many reasons can be assigned for this intimate as-

sociation between judgment and forgiveness.

I. God Joins Pardon with Impressive Correction to guard us against mean utilitarian views of grace, and to train us into a true appreciation of the inwardness of His saving work. In the beginning of a soul's return to God it is often moved by selfish, superficial fear. The unhappy effects that follow after sin stir up loathing, trepidation, mental distress, outward amendment and prayer. But these initial motives are intended to be temporary and transitional only and that man has not tasted the deepest secret of forgiveness who looks upon the grace as mere security against the portentous suffering in which the Divine wrath manifests itself.

II. Our Surviving Imperfections Require That the Forgiveness of the Past Shall Be Associated with a Rigid Judgment of Its Lapses. The fact that we look upon our oft-repeated delinquencies as trivial in their import shows that we need an admonitory discipline of sternness as well as a generous and compassionate ab-solution. Again and again are we tempted to a presumption which would pervert the grace of God. And the more closely God takes us to His favour and friendship the more urgent is the necessity for the providential lesson.

III. This Union of Judgment and Mercy in the Divine Dealings with Us Is Designed to Show That the Law of Retributive Righteousness Never Ceases to Operate in Our Lives. It is immanent as God Himself, for the law is the form assumed by His personal activity. Our deceitful hearts tempt us to imagine that the government which frees us from condemnation must be weak, shifty, vacillating in its foundation principles. In the dawning hours of our release from fear moods arise when we incline to think that grace is some clever

surreptitious process to disburden us from our bonds and obligations, and following upon that we fall into an unconfessed and inarticulate antinomianism.

IV. This Association of Judgment and Mercy Makes the Public Declaration of Divine Forgiveness Possible. Escape must not be too easy for the man who is liable to fall away and repeat his offences. As private citizens even we can hold no relation with the man who seeks to shirk the just pain and penalty of his transgression. We might be suspected of condoning delinquencies, and when those delinquencies are felonious to do so might carry with it serious consequences.

V. These Chastisements Are Intended to Illuminate the Character of God and to Give an Assuring Insight Into the Dispositions of Those upon Whom They Fall. Although infinite love associates itself with infinite holiness, that holiness is exacting to the last degree. It is no light thing to come short of Divine glory. Not only does the Divine government compel a judicial reckoning with the lapses of God's people, but something in the Divine character likewise insists upon it. He who experiences no inward quickening cannot be absolved from condemnation, and to that inward quickening temporal chastisements are contributory.—T. G. Selby.

Do Our Sins Always Find Us Out?

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins."—Psalm 103: 10.

If there be any one truth which holds the modern mind with a more relentless grasp than any other, it is that sin is followed inevitably and inescapably by its due penalty.

This solemn assurance is bound upon our minds by quoting some of

the most emphatic sentences of Scripture. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." "The wages of sin is death." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." These teachers strike us with a silent dread as they summon up the conspicuous sinners and make them pass in a procession of shame. Esau finds his profane word fastened as a doom on his spirit. Jacob is driven by his sin into exile and compelled to reap its reward many years after, both in his own anguish and in the sins of the children. Saul becomes a madman and a suicide. David walks in the streets of his city with men's eyes condemning him, and sees his iniquity blighting his home and undoing the work of his unstained manhood. Solomon's voluptuous day ends in a corruption whose penalty he himself begins to bear. And so name after name is summoned up, down to Judas rushing on death in his despair, to show that each man receives the full reward of his iniquity.

Now of the element of truth in this teaching no one need have any doubt, but it is a truth so much overstated, and sometimes set down so nakedly, and without relation to other truths, as to be almost a lie. It is not the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is not true that every sin is visited by its due penalty. It is not true that a man's sin always finds him out. It was true that if those Israelites to whom this sombre message was spoken had selfishly remained on the farther side of Jordan, and been content with their own portion, a severe penalty would have fallen upon them. Theirs would have been one of those modern sins for which a man suffers more surely than he knows. It is the sin of the man who selfishly and indulgently "cultivates his garden." But it is not true

that a man always pays the uttermost farthing. The man who says so forgets that no single law is unlimited in its scope and power. He ignores the facts of life. He knows nothing of Christian experience. He forgets that law is not supreme and dominant. And he leaves out of account this imperial truth, that there is in the world and over the world a great will, a tender heart, and an infinite power. He forgets that this will uses and controls law. In a word, this grim and crude and unchastened teaching leaves out—God. The Psalmist saw the truth steadily, and he saw it whole when he wrote, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins.”

Two boys were playing on a narrow ledge, worn smooth by adventurous feet, in the face of a sea-side cliff. They had come along the path from the mill, which was set beside the neighbouring stream. Some twenty feet beneath the deep sea-green water lapped against the rock. One of the boys was the miller’s son—a bold, lawless spirit. He had been warned again and again of the peril of the path. He had been caught and chastised. His defiant spirit loved the danger. This day a careless step to the edge paid its penalty, and he fell into the smooth deep water below. Death seemed to be his just fate. But his keen cry was heard in the mill, and his father ran out with anger on his face. But when he saw his son struggling with death the frown became a spasm of anguish, and at the risk of his own life he plunged in and rescued him. As that boy lay in his exhaustion, tended by loving care, he knew how far it was true that our sin finds us out. He understood this Psalmist’s profounder word, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” He knew that the world, which seems to be all law, is really all love, and that mercy rejoices against judgment.

Let me illustrate this truth to you, looking at it along the broad lines of God’s dealings with us.

I. *Look, in the First Place, Along the Line of God’s Providence.* When a man’s sin should find him out God’s providence often interferes to avert the penalty and to hide the shame. A man has bowed his head for the stroke, but all that he has felt has been the touch of God’s hand in mercy. Paul taught that “whatsoever” a man soweth, that, and nothing different from that, shall he reap. If a man sows oats, he shall not reap thistles. “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” But between the sowing and the reaping there come in other laws. There lies the whole providence of God. A man may sow and never reap at all. A man may reap where he has not sown and gather where he has not strawed. And so between a man’s sin and his finding out there comes in the providence of God. It is written in many a scripture, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins.”

II. *Look, in the Second Place, Along the Line of God’s Law.* Men sometimes speak as though this law of penalty were the one dominant and overruling ordinance. They speak as though the consequences of a man’s sin must sweep on like a grim and unresting fate, must pursue him as a Nemesis with the steady foot of inescapable vengeance. It is a terrifying truth that our sin sets in motion blind forces of retribution. Every man is aghast when he realises how wide and far-reaching is the range of a single evil deed. But God uses His law to conquer law. God enlists the higher law of mercy to repel the lower law of judgment. God counterworks the law of retribution by the law of repair.

III. *Look, in the Third Place, Along the Line of God’s Grace.* Clearly

God deals with infinite mercy in His providence and in His law. But there is an inner world where, at first sight, a man's sins find him out ruthlessly. God's providence may prevent the direst consequences. God's law may renew the life and bring out the fair blossom of many an outward grace. But there are what Newman calls, in the noble title of his overdrawn sermon, "The moral consequences of single sins." There are those moral and spiritual issues and effects which are the curse of the soul. The profligate may sit "a sober man among his boys," but he cannot undo the past. He cannot cleanse his memory, he cannot be wholesome in thought. The events of a man's wilful years may be left behind him, but in the disability of his conscience, the defects of his character, the torture of old desires, and the indelible hues of sin and error with which his mind is dyed, he shows that his sin is finding him out. And deepest of all there is the sense of things done which cannot be undone, the unanswerable accusation of the past, the breach between the soul and God. We need something more than sweet providence, and something more than correcting law. We need grace. We need that forgiveness and renewal which are proclaimed in the Gospel and wrought out in the Cross of Christ. We need something more than the working of a providence which may interpose between us and our due reward. We need something more than laws which may order and direct new forces. We need to have the breach closed between God and the soul. We need the guilty conscience cleansed. We need the most awful and most desolating consequence of all removed from us, our fearfulness of God and our alienation to Him. These are given us by the Cross.—W. M. Clow.

Pardon with Punishment.

"Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."—Psalm 109: 8.

A very great and grave mistake about the whole relations of forgiveness and retribution, and about the whole character of that Divine nature from which they both flow is implied in that word "though"; what the psalm really says is, "Thou wast a God who forgavest them, and thou tookest vengeance," etc. No antagonism between pardon and retribution; both are regarded as parts of one great whole and as flowing from the holy love of God.

I. Forgiveness Is, at Bottom, the Undisturbed Communication of the Love of God to Sinful Men.—We are far too apt to think that God pardons men in the fashion in which the sovereign pardons a culprit who has been sentenced to be hanged. Such pardon implies nothing as to the feelings of either the criminal or the monarch. The forgiveness of God is over and over again set forth in Scripture as being a father's forgiveness. Indeed, I do not remember that we ever read of the pardon of our Judge or of our King, but we read "Your heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses." Let us keep fast by that. And then, let us remember our own childhood. What makes the little face fall and the tears come to the eyes? Is it your taking down the rod from behind the door or the grave disapprobation in your face and the rebuke in your eyes? It is not only the buffet from the father's hand that makes the punishment, but still more the displeasure of the father's heart that makes the child's punishment. And forgiveness is not complete when the father says, "Well, go away, I will not hurt you," but when he says, "Well, come, I am not angry with you, and I love you

still." Not putting up the rod, but taking your child to your heart is your forgiveness.

II. Such Pardon Does Necessarily Sweep Away the One True Penalty of Sin.—What is the penalty of sin? "The wages of sin is death." What is "death"? The wrenching away of a dependent soul from God. How is that penalty ended? When the soul is united to God in the threefold bond of trust, love, and obedience. The two statements that forgiveness is the communication of the love of God unhindered by man's sin, and that forgiveness is the removal of the punishment of sin, are really but two ways of saying the same thing.

III. The Pardoning Mercy of God Leaves Many Penalties Unremoved.—If you waste your youth, no repentance will send the shadow back upon the dial, or recover the ground lost by idleness, or restore the constitution shattered by dissipation, or give again the resources wasted upon vice, or bring back the fleeting opportunities. If you forget God and live without Him in the world, fancying that it is time enough to become "religious" when you "have had your fling"—even were you to come back at last—and remember how few do—you could not obliterate the remembrance of misused years, nor the deep marks which they had left upon imagination and thought, and taste, and habit. The wounds can all be healed indeed; for the Good Physician, blessed be His name, has lancets and bandages, and balm and anodynes for the deadliest, but scars remain even when the gash is closed.

IV. Pardoning Love So Modifies the Punishment That It Becomes an Occasion for Solemn Thankfulness. The outward act remaining the same, its whole aspect to us, the object of it, is changed, when we think of it as flowing from the same love which pardons. It is no harsh—no, nor

even only a righteous Judge, who deals with us. We are not crushed between the insensate wheels of a dead machine, nor smitten by the blow of an inflexible fate, but we are chastened by a Father's hand, who loves us too well to do by us that which He forbids us to do by one another—suffer sin upon our brother. "When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned." The stroke of condemnation will never fall upon our pardoned hearts. That it may not, the loving strokes of His discipline must needs accompany the embrace of His forgiveness. And so the pains change their character, and become things to be desired, to be humbly welcomed, to be patiently borne and used, and even to be woven into our hymns of praise.—A. Mac-laren.

The Duty of Witnessing in Public for God.

"I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."—*Psalm 111:1.*

The terms used seem to include the narrow and the wider spheres in which our witness for God may be, and should be, made. The Prayer-book Version brings out this point. "Secretly, among the faithful, and in the congregation." It is a point with the psalmists that God's praise can be no private thing merely, no personal indulgence or enjoyment only. If a man feels thankful to God, if a man recognises his indebtedness to God, if a man is impressed with the greatness of God or the goodness of God, he lies under the solemn obligation to say so to somebody. If he is a sincere man, he feels the impulse to say so to somebody. He will even want to speak of these things to every-

body whom he can reach. The sentences of the fortieth psalm may be taken as characteristic of the psalmists, and there is something guileful in the man who is unable or unwilling to recognise this duty of publicly witnessing for God. "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart: my talk hath been of thy truth, and of thy salvation. I have not kept back thy loving mercy and truth from the great congregation."

I. *Each Man Has a Public Sphere of His Own.*—A circle outside himself, of which he is himself the centre. Every man, in his own particular public sphere, is bound to make his witness for God. It is the same thing to say that every man must come into relationship with others outside himself; and these relations constitute his first public sphere. It may be a friendship. It may be the marital relation. It may be a family. It may be a business or social circle. If a man is for God, he must be active and voiceful for God in those first spheres. Illustrate by the stone thrown into a pond: it influences the waters that touch the shores only through influencing the little circle of waters just where it fell, and so on and on, through ever-widening circles. 1. Personal influence, 2. family influence, 3. social influence, must be used for the convincement of the claims and goodness of God.

II. *Each Man Has a Place in the General Public Sphere.*—The congregation is made up of individuals, and the enthusiasm of each goes to make the enthusiasm of the whole. The congregation is no mere mass of receptivity. That mistaken notion spoils much of public worship. The congregation, as an aggregate of individuals, should make common witness, by praise, thanksgiving, and testimony. But the testimony that is healthy and inspiring to others is testimony for God and concerning God; not that weak and enervating thing, testimony

concerning individual feelings and experiences.—Robert Tuck.

Will Power.

"I shall not die, but live."—Psalm 118: 17.

I. This Psalm has been well called the "*Hymn of Deliverance from Exile*," as the song of Moses was the "*Hymn of Deliverance from Egypt*." It is such a *Te Deum* as was possible when as yet the Gospel had not been revealed. The enemies of Israel had done their worst. They had compassed Israel "about like bees"; they had "thrust sore at him," that he might fall. But with this recollection, and with the consciousness of bitter enmity still existing, there is mingled the glad confidence, the buoyant hope, that their enemies shall be "quenched as the fire of thorns." "*I shall not die, but live.*" The psalm pictures Israel keeping high festival, probably at the dedication of the new temple. The day itself was solemnly set apart, and a joyous procession is seen advancing towards the sacred edifice. As it nears the entrance, the warders of the gates are summoned to open them, that the people may go in to praise the Lord. "And then, as the throng passes within, the Psalmist notes a circumstance which forms a leading feature in his poem. In building the new temple, some block of stone had been, at first, laid aside as useless, and then, on fuller consideration, it had been lifted up to fill one of the most important positions in the structure." The sacred poet fastens on this incident, and sees in it the striking suggestion of Israel's own history—a suggestion which our Lord Himself takes up and applies to Himself as being the most complete fulfilment of its prophecy. Israel had seemed useless, impossible of recovery, unfit altogether for the high

purposes for which God had at first designed her. Carried off and apparently lost in the sweltering mob of nationalities in which she had been swallowed up, what good was she capable of? what useful part in the upbuilding of the kingdom of God could she serve? So all men thought, and with apparent abundant reason. But the festival which the psalm celebrates contradicted all that, and the stone, once rejected, but now filling so important a place in the new temple, was the type and prophecy of the high service which yet, and in spite of all past and present obstacles, Israel was called to render in the accomplishment of the good will of God to man. So that she could say, as here she does, "I shall not die, but," etc.

II. It Was Adopted by Our Lord for Himself.—Not alone the special part of the psalm (ver. 22), which tells of the rejected but exalted stone (Matt. 21:42), but the whole tone and spirit of the psalm. It looked, as the day of His death drew near, as if He were forever the "Rejected of man." But the words of our text were His conviction (Luke 18:31-33). He, though humbled even to death, and that the death of the cross, yet should He conquer death and live forevermore (Rom. 6:10; Rev. 1:18). The exile of Israel and their glad return were but shadows of the darkness of the cross and the glory of Easter Day.

III. It Has Been Ever True of the Church of God.—She has been plunged into deepest woe and brought down to death. 1. *By fierce persecution.* Let the martyr ages tell. 2. *By the growth and spread of false doctrine.* The faith once delivered to the saints has been tampered with, perverted, so that its true character has been lost. 3. *And worse still, moral corruption* has once and again seized on her, and made her a thing of horror to all holy souls. But in each case it has been possible for the

faithful remnant to lift up the exultant chant, "I shall not die," etc.

IV. It Is the Well-warranted Hope and Confidence of Every Christian Soul.—1. *Sometimes the text comes literally true.* Life has all but gone; the powers of the body seemed incapable of recovery; but restoration has been given. Let such restored life be given up to the declaration of the works of the Lord. 2. *In the hour of terrible temptation.* How many a soul has been all but lost, but, grasping the hand of the Lord, has yet been saved! 3. *At the hour of death.* The body dies, but not we.—Charles Short.

Three Great Things in Human Life.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—Psalm 119:11.

In these few words there are three great things.—A great revelation—a great act—and a great purpose.

I. A Great Revelation. "Thy word." A word is a revelation of intelligent moral mind. The value of a word depends upon the intellectual and moral worth of the mind it expresses. The words of thoughtless men are wind and nothing more. The words of corrupt men are the channels of impurity. The words of the holy and the strong are amongst the most elevating forces in society. Great souls incarnate themselves in words and live and work here long after the tongue that uttered them or the hand that wrote them are crumpled into dust. But what is a human word compared with the Word of God? The revelation of a mind infinitely wise, immaculately holy, boundlessly loving and almighty in strength. This word we have here, and it is given us in order to work our spiritual renovation, and to restore us to the moral image of its

author. There is nothing under these heavens so valuable to man as this word. What are the criteria by which men determine the value of things? 1. Scarcity, 2. Usefulness, 3. Judgment of competent authorities, 4. Duration. Try this word by any of these criteria, and its value will be found to transcend all power of appreciation.

II. *A Great Act.* "Thy word have I hid in mine heart." There are many wrong uses of this word. 1. The infidel uses it in order to throw doubt upon its contents, invalidate its authority and caricature its discoveries. 2. The sectarian uses it in order to sustain his own crotchets and justify his own exclusiveness. 3. The worldly-minded uses it in order by writing or preaching, or profession, to promote his secular gains and advance his social influence. Sadly have men in all ages abused this word, and sadly do they abuse it now. What is the right use of it? To hide it in the heart. Many men have it in the intellect, in the memory, in passing emotions, but what is needed is the hiding of it in the heart. Put it there as leaven in the meal to ferment, permeate through the mass, and transform all to its own character. Hide it as golden grain in the soil that it may germinate and grow, and produce abundant fruit. It is a wonderful thought that God has given man the capacity to take into his nature the word, and profoundly solemn is the thought that it is only as he takes in this word into the depths of his nature and hides it there that he can reach a happy destiny.

III. *A Great Purpose.* "That I might not sin against Thee." First: Sin is a terrible evil. There is nothing worse in the universe than sin. It is worse than hell, for it is the cause and spirit of it. Sin is a battling with Omnipotence, an outrage of our constitution, an opposition to the

order of the universe, a plunging of our being into darkness and woe. Secondly: There is a propensity in man to fall into this evil. This is implied in the words, and this, alas! is true to all history universal. Experience and our own consciousness. Thirdly: God's word in the heart is the efficient counteractive. The author of these words not only deprecated sin, felt his liability to it, but felt that the Word of God in his heart would secure him. The Word of God is in eternal antagonism to all sin, and beside there is no power on the earth that can remove it from mankind.

Conclusion.—What art thou doing with this word, my brother? It has come to thee. Thou hast it in thy hand, and many of its facts and doctrines are in thy memory. Hast thou taken it down into thy heart, as the holy power to cleanse the very fountains of thy being? Has it entered thee as the only agent that can rectify the disordered mechanism of thy nature?—The Homilist.

The Bible Better Than Money.

"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."—Psalm 119:72.

The Bible is better than money:—

I. *Because It Gives Us Better Food.* Money can buy very fine food; it can load your table with dainties. But it cannot give you food for your moral and immortal soul. The Bible can. It is well designated the "word of life," because by it the life of God is implanted in the human spirit and by it preserved. Christ is "our life," and the support of "our life"; and the Bible is full of Christ. He is its beginning, middle, and end. The Bible is better than money:—

II. *Because It Gives Us Better Raiment.* Money can buy very fine

raiment. It can give you silken robes sparkling with diamonds. But it cannot give you the best robe. The Bible can. It offers you "the robe of righteousness," and "the robe of joy;"—robes that adorn, protect, exalt, and endure. Robes that will wear through all the changes and vicissitudes of life, wear when the heavens and earth flee away in flames, wear brighter and brighter through the millenniums of eternity. The Bible is better than money:—

III. Because It Gives Us Better Friends. A true friend is the dearest treasure on earth. The good man sings:—

"I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I held so dear."

Money can give you friends; but they are seldom true. And even the richest friends that money can buy for you are not to be compared with the poorest friends the Bible can give, the true men of earth, the angels and archangels of heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect," "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," and the praises thereof, these are the friends the Bible offers you. The Bible is better than money:—

IV. Because It Gives Us Better Homes. Money can give you very fine houses. But it cannot give you "a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." The Bible can. Well then might the Psalmist exclaim, in looking up to the author of such a wonderful book, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."—J. Dunlop.

The Lighted Faith.

"*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*"—Psalm 119:105.

Two thoughts are suggested by these words.

I. That Man's Destiny Without the Gospel is a progress in the dark. The "lamp" implies night; night in which neither moon or stars can give sufficient light for the journey. First: Darkness rests on man's path of duty. The ages have been rife with conflicting theories of duty. The world by wisdom knew not God, whose existence is the foundation and whose will is the standard of duty. Men, without the Gospel, grope as in the dark on all moral questions. Secondly: Darkness rests on man's path of happiness. The removal of an universally-felt guilt, and the expulsion from the soul of passions and propensities that agitate the heart, disorganise the powers, pervert the will and pollute the character, are essential to happiness. But how are they to be secured? Without the Gospel a dark night rests on these questions.

II. Man's Destiny With the Gospel is a progress in the light. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet," etc. First: The light is ever in the advance. We carry the lamp before us to shed a light upon the path in which we are directing our steps.

The Bible is always in advance of man's intelligence. The world's intelligence has outgrown many other systems, and they lie obsolete in the relics of the past, but the Bible keeps in advance of all human discoveries. Secondly: The light is always clear. It shows distinctly whereabouts you are; all the objects in the path, however minute, stand out with distinctness. It shows the objects in their true character. It does not throw a lurid glare which gives a false coloring to the scene on which it falls. Clear is the light which the Gospel sheds on all the subjects of duty and destiny. Thirdly: The light is thoroughly sufficient. It lights up the whole region through which we have

to pass, throws its beams along the whole path. It lights you into the nightless world. Fourthly: The light is ever enduring. It is not an ignus fatuus, or offspring of mist and vapor, that glitters for a moment only to mislead. Nor a meteor that flashes athwart the firmament and is gone, leaving a deeper darkness in the night. It is a quenchless lamp; its oil is inexhaustible, no waters can quench it, no storms can blow it out. From Celsus down to this hour, infidelity has sought to quench it, but it burns brighter to-day than ever. The Bible radiates with more or less brightness in all the literature of the world, and in every home of Christendom. It gleams in the mansion of the prince, and often burns with a lustre in the beggar's lowly cot.—David Thomas.

The Saints' Estimate of the Word of God.

"I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."—Psalm 119: 127.

A great portion of this extensive and interesting psalm is taken up in expressing the writer's attachment to the word of God. He speaks of it under a variety of terms: such as law, precepts, statutes, testimonies, and, in our text, commandments. He expresses the highest esteem for and attachment to them. "I love thy commandments above gold," etc. Observe:

I. *The Supreme Excellency of the Holy Scriptures.*—This will be evident if we consider: 1. Their heavenly origin. Here called the law of God—law of His mouth, etc. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). 2. Great antiquity. The oldest book in existence. Its records embrace the creation of the world, etc. 3. Their miraculous preservation. They have been hated and held in utter detestation by thousands; yet

have they been preserved amidst all the revolutions of time, and handed down from generation to generation, even until now. 4. Their glorious revelations. Concerning man—in his original state, depravity, as redeemed, etc.; concerning God—His perfections, works, mind; concerning Jesus—His offices, death, resurrection, etc.; concerning life, death, and immortality; concerning judgment, heaven, and hell; in short, concerning all which relates to man's present or eternal safety and happiness. Notice—

II. *The Saint's Estimate of Them.*—"I love thy commandments above gold," etc. Gold is the most precious of metals, and is distinguished for its rarity, weight, brightness, and value; and in these respects may be a fit emblem of the Holy Scriptures. But gold, 1. Is in its nature earthly and material. The word of God, heavenly and spiritual. 2. Gold only confers on its possessor temporal benefits. The Word of God, eternal benefits. 3. Gold in its nature mutable and perishable. The word of our God abideth forever. But how do saints prove their attachment to the Scriptures? (1) By a diligent perusal of them (Isa. 34: 16; 1 Tim. 4: 13). (2) By making them the subject of meditation. "I will meditate in thy precepts," &c. (ver. 15). "In thy law I will meditate day and night," &c. (3) By a profession of the doctrines they exhibit. "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth;" (ver. 13). (4) By subjection to their authority, and practical attention to the precepts they enforce (ver. 32-35, 168). "Doers of the word" (Jas. 1: 22). They run in the way of God's commands, &c. (5) By spreading abroad the blessed truths they contain. "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings," &c. (Psalm 119: 46).

III. *The Advantage of Cordial Attachment to the Word of God.*

—1. Increasing knowledge. "Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies." "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts, &c. (ver. 100). "Able to make the wise," &c. (2 Tim. 3:15, 16). 2. Increasing holiness. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee" (ver. 11). "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way," &c. (ver. 9). 3. Increasing happiness. "Thy statutes have been my songs," &c. (ver. 54). "Great peace have they who love thy law" (ver. 165). "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies," &c. "This

is my comfort in my affliction," &c. (ver. 50). "They are my heritage, and rejoicing of my heart," &c. (ver. 111).

Application: 1. How grateful should we be for the divine word! Especially that we have the whole canon, the volume complete; law, prophets, gospels, and epistles. Let them be the rule of our life—the directory of our faith—the joy of our souls. 2. How unwise to neglect this blessed book! to be ignorant amidst the meridian blaze of gospel light. 3. There is no other true guide to immortality and eternal life.—The Homilist.

PROVERBS

God's Deepest Horror in Sin.

"*He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul.*"—Proverbs 8:36.

I. *This Is Not the Common Mode of Thinking About Sin.* The common mode is to regard God's horror of sin as resulting from a sense of injury to Himself. Here, on the contrary, the Divine horror of sin is said to consist in the fact that it is an injury to me. A father says to a child, "Do not go near the fire while I am out; if you do, I shall be very angry." The child probably thinks that his anger will lie in the fact of being disobeyed. It will not lie there at all; it will be stirred purely by the fear that in its act of disobedience the child may have hurt itself. And if he finds that the child has hurt itself, his anger will be transmuted into the most intense pain.

II. *Now, Take What We Call Hell-Fire.* The heavenly Father cries to His children, "I command you not to go near it lest you get scorched." What is the ground of that command? Is it the wish to exercise a Divine au-

thority? No; startling as it may seem, it is the wish to avert a Divine fear. You have heard the expression, "The fear of the Lord." When I am exhorted to cultivate the fear of the Lord, what does that mean? It means that I am to get into my heart that fear which dwells in the heart of God, that I am to have for my brother the same dread which the heavenly Father has for His children. The fear of the Lord is the fear that His sons and daughters will touch the fire.

III. *You Speak of God's Sovereign Decrees.* God has no sovereign decrees; God's decrees are all paternal. The decrees of a despot are meant to clip the subject's wings; those of the Father are meant to expand the wings. Why are you forbidden to hate? Because hate cramps the soul. Why are you forbidden to be jealous? Because jealousy narrows the soul. Why are you forbidden to be selfish? Because selfishness locks the soul. Why are you commanded to love? Because love is liberty. Why are you commanded to pity? Because pity is power. Why are you commanded to sympathize? Because sympathy is

the heart's soaring. The commands of your Father break the cage and set you free. He prescribes faith that you may fly. He offers grace that you may grow. He enjoins kindness that you may kindle. He exacts brotherhood that you may bloom. He requires service that you may sing. He invites prayer that you may prophesy. Not in His honour, but in yours, does He ask the homage of your heart; the Father has no glory but for the enlargement of His child.

—G. Matheson.

Making Light of Sin.

"Fools make a mock at sin."—
Proverbs 14:9.

When we think of all the unhappiness sin causes, and of all the misery of which it is the parent, we might deem it to be a thing incredible that any person should make light of sin. Sin is the great power that makes for loneliness, as it is the power everywhere that makes for wreckage; and in the light of that knowledge, which is common property, to make a mock at sin might seem impossible. Still more might it seem to be impossible when we recall the teaching of our faith. If Christ has shown us what God thinks of goodness, He has also shown us what God thinks of sin. And the one fact that the Father gave the Son that He might die for sinners on the cross, might be thought to make such mockery incredible. Yet the fact remains that men do mock at sin. They treat it lightly and make a jest of it. They do not view it with that holy anger which is the constant attitude of God. Alive in a measure, as they all must be, to the handiwork of sin in human life, they are not moved by it as God is moved, nor stirred by it profoundly as was Jesus.

We see that, for instance, in the matter of confession, in the confes-

sion of our sins in prayer. No part of prayer is less real to most men than the part which voices the confession of sin.

Again we gather this prevailing lightness from the kind of way in which men talk of sin. They speak of it with a smile or with a jest and cover it up under some pleasant name. When a man is dead in earnest in a matter you can generally infer it from his speech. When a man is dead in earnest in a matter it is then he begins to call a spade a spade. And the very fact that in men's common speech sin is not spoken of with such directness, is a straw that shows us how the wind is blowing.

Again we may gather how lightly men think of sin from the different standards by which they judge it. Sin is a very different thing in us, from what it is in the lives of other people.

Well, then, if that be the fact, can we discover the causes of that fact? There are some reasons which suggest themselves at once, and I shall mention one or two of them.

I. *In the First Place, Men Treat Sin Lightly Just Because They Are So Accustomed to It.* It is so common that their hearts are hardened; so universal that they are never startled.

II. *Again We Are Tempted to Make Light of Sin Because of Its Intertwining With the Good.* In deeper senses than the Psalmist thought of, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. If all that was bad in individual character stood by itself in visible isolation, then as we looked at a man and praised the good in him, we might feel the loathsomeness of what was bad. But human character is not constructed so, with separate stations for its good and evil; it is an intricate and inextricable tangle of what is brightest with what is very dark. Then I beheld, says Bunyan in his dream, and there was a way to hell from nigh the gate of heaven. I

think that that is so with every man: his heaven and hell are never far apart.

III. Once More Men Are Tempted to Make Light of Sin Because It Veils Its Consequences With Such Consummate Skill. Sin is the jauntiest of all adventurers, and sets its best foot forward gallantly. The certainty of sin is always this, that its to-morrow is a little worse. And so with consummate skill it hides to-morrow, and says in the very words of Christ to-day, and to-day is so exquisitely sweet and passionate that certainties of judgment are forgotten.

IV. Again, Many Make Light of Sin Because No One Knows Sin's Power Till He Resists It. It is a natural law in the spiritual world that power can be measured by resistance. Only when the life of grace begins, and a man awakes to all that life may be, does he learn the powerful swirl of that black river that flows in the dark places of his heart.—G. H. Morrison.

The Moral Obstinacy of Sin.

"Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."—Proverbs 27:22.

"In Japan and China," says a modern author, "rice is beaten in a tub, with a pestle having a heavy head-piece in order to increase its weight and force. The grain is pounded with a view of clearing away those extraneous matters which would render the rice unwholesome for food. The workman exerts every sinew to the utmost in wielding the pestle. In some cases it is moved by the foot." Dr. Thompson, when near Sidon, observed many people braying or pounding wheat with a pestle in a mortar, and says: "Every family has one of these large stone mortars and you

may hear the sound of the braying at all hours as you walk in the streets of the city." Reference is made to this in the text. The process of driving out the chaff and refuse from the grain is attended with success; but with some men, however severe may be the efforts you employ to drive out the folly that is in them, your labour is in vain. There is no correction that will cure them. Repeated reproofs accomplish nothing. Their folly cleaves to them still. They are so incorrigibly bad that, like Ahaz, they trespass yet more.—(2 Chron. 27: 22.)

There are incorrigible sinners; men whose natural obstinacy of disposition has been strengthened by habits of depravity. The Antediluvians were of this class; so was Pharaoh, so was Ahaz, so was Ephraim, who was joined to idols and who was given up; so were the Jews in the time of Christ, who went on with a mulish stubbornness to fill up the measures of their iniquity. "There is something," says Johnson, "in obstinacy which differs from every other passion. Whenever it fails, it never recovers, but either breaks like iron, or crumbles sulkily away like a fractured arch. Most other passions have their periods of fatigue and rest, their sufferings and their cure, but obstinacy has no resource, and the first wound is mortal." "An obstinate man," says Pope, "does not hold opinions, they hold him." "Stiff in opinion," says Dryden, "always in the wrong."

The fact that there are such sinners is:—

I. *A Warning to All.* There is a danger of every sinner passing into the incorrigible state. Whilst it is true that some men have natural temperaments more obstinate than others, the tendency of sin, in all cases, is to make men stubborn and foolhardy. The power of sinful habits renders their natures so stiff and rigid, that

sooner would the Ethiopian change his skin than they would change their beliefs and plans. The figure in the text is not too strong to express their incorrigibility. In the mortar they brayed off the chaff from the wheat, and got at the true grain; but wickedness, in the heart of the incorrigible is not the husk, it is the grain itself; it cannot be reached without pounding it to pieces. The day of probation, it is to be feared, terminates with many before the day of death. God says to them, "My Spirit shall no longer strive with you; you are joined to idols, I shall let you alone." "The things that belong to your peace are hid from your eyes." The fact is—

II. *A Guide to Teachers.* On such characters it is useless to waste time, they are the reprobate. "Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy mouth." "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine." "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but, seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."—Acts 13:46. What do such passages as these mean but this, that there are incorrigible sinners, and, on them you are not to waste your time and energy? Do not use the "pestle" of your argument and rhetoric in the "mortar" of your ministry; their wickedness is ingrained, it is not husk, it is heart.

"You may as well
Forbid the sea for to obey the moon
As, by oath remove, or counsel shake,
The fabric of his folly."—Shakespeare.

The Homilist.

Conscience.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."—Proverbs 28:1.

Men differ in their definitions of conscience, but agree in the facts and functions of its existence: it is not an attribute of the mind, but its moral substance: it is not a limb of the soul, but the heart of the man: it is the moral I. It is that without which the human creature would cease to be a man: it is what Coleridge calls "the pulse of reason." "Conscience," says Trench, "is a solemn word, if there be such in the world." Now, there is not one of us whose Latin will not bring him so far as to tell him that this word is from 'con' and 'scire.' But what does that 'con' intend? Conscience is not merely that which I know, but that which I know with some one else; for this prefix cannot, as I think, be esteemed superfluous or taken to imply merely that which I know with or to myself. That other knower whom the word implies is God; His law making itself known and felt in the heart; and the work of conscience is the bringing of each of our acts and thoughts as a lesser to be tried and measured by this as a greater; the word growing out of and declaring that awful duplicity of our moral being, which arises from the presence of God in the soul—our thoughts, by the standard which that presence supplies, and as the result of a comparison with it, "accusing or excusing one another."

The text leads us to notice two things—

I. *The Timidity of a Guilty Conscience.* "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth." No man pursued Adam in lovely Eden, yet he fled. "I heard thy voice in the garden, and was afraid." No man pursued Cain when the world was in the freshness and beauty of youth: yet he fled.

The murderer, whose reason well assures him that no man could ever discover him as the author of the dreadful deed, flees from the scene with the utmost rapidity: the rustling of a leaf, the creaking of a branch, the chirping of a bird, sound in his ear as the tread of the avenger.

First: From what does a man under a sense of guilt flee? Not from man: "no man pursueth;" from the visionary creation of his own conscience. The pursuer is a mere phantom, still not the less real, not the less near, not the less terrific on this account. He cannot escape it; no rapid bounds over seas or continents would separate him from it; it is not at his heels, it is in his heart. He hears the visionary pursuer in every sound; he feels his warm breath in the atmosphere around him; he expects his avenging clutch every instant.

"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind,"
"The thief doth fear each bush an officer."—Shakespeare.

Whither can he flee from its presence? Ah, whither, indeed?

Secondly: Why does a man under a sense of guilt flee? This is the profoundest question in the nature of man. Why should sin awaken fear where no man is? Between the conscience and the Judge of the universe there is an electric bond, binding them indissolubly together. Every sin acts upon that mystic wire, and sends the shock of judgment into the guilty soul.

Thirdly: Whither does a man under a sense of guilt flee? Sometimes to the Lamb of God; then all is safe and right. But, oftener, alas, to carnal revelry and debauch, where all is wrong and peril.

II. *The Heroism of a Righteous Conscience.* "The righteous is as bold as a lion"; a man whose conscience is with him can dare the universe. "Though hosts shall encamp against me, yet will I not fear." There are many noble instances of this in Sacred History. How heroically Caleb and Joshua stood against the rebellion of their countrymen: how bravely Elijah dared the wrath of Ahab; with what undaunted courage did Nehemiah discharge his perilous work—"Should such a man as I flee?" With what an invincible defiance did the three Hebrew youths oppose Nebuchadnezzar and enter the fiery furnace. The boldness of the Apostles in their evangelic labours struck astonishment into the men of their age; "They are as bold as a lion," the boldest of all animals. "This noble animal," says Paxton, "is the most perfect model of boldness and courage. He never flies from the hunters, nor is frightened by their onset. If their numbers force him to yield, he retires slowly, step by step, frequently turning upon his pursuers. He has been known to attack a whole caravan, and when obliged to retire, he always retires fighting, and with his face to the enemy." Rectitude is the heart of true moral courage; where this is not, there may be brutal daring, but no true heroism.—The Homilist.

ISAIAH

Pardoning Mercy.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your

sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."—Isaiah 1:18.

The pardon of sin has been justly

called "the life-blood of religion." It is this which runs through all parts of the Scripture, like the blood in our veins, and is the foremost object in the glorious Gospel.

I. The first thing in the text is *A Charge Implied*, and more particularly expressed, in the former verses of this chapter. The charge is sin—sin the most aggravated. Scarlet and crimson are colors far remote from white, which is the emblem of innocence, or righteousness. (Rev. 19:8). But here sinners are represented as in garments stained with blood. The bloody, murderous, destructive nature of sin may be intended. Sin has slain its millions. (Rom. 5:12). Some understand by the word "scarlet," double-dyed; as deeply tinctured by sin as possible; as when any garment has been twice dyed, first in the wool, and again in the thread or piece. So great sinners are twice dyed, first in their corrupt nature, and then again in the long confirmed habits of actual transgression. It is absolutely necessary that each of us should personally know that this is his own case.

II. *The Invitation*.—True religion is the most reasonable thing in the world. 1. Is not self-preservation highly reasonable? We account it the first law of nature, and should blame the man who neglects it. Is a house on fire? Let the inhabitant escape for his life. 2. Is it not reasonable for a man to do well for himself? Yes; "Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself." We commend the honest, ingenious, industrious tradesman. Is it reasonable for a man to mind his own business? Well, "one thing is needful"; the care of thy soul is the business of life (Luke 10:42). Is it reasonable to improve opportunities for business, as fairs and markets? Redeem then the time, and catch the golden opportunities of gain to thy soul. Is it reasonable to make a good bargain? The Christian makes the best in the

world. Is it reasonable to cultivate friendship with the wise, the good, and the great? Oh, how wise to make Christ our Friend. 3. Is it not reasonable to believe the God of truth? The Word of God has every confirmation we could wish. 4. Is not love to God and man perfectly reasonable? This is the whole of our religion. Is it reasonable or not to love the Best of beings better than all other beings?

III. *The Gracious Promise*.— "Though your sins," &c. The pardon of sin is the first thing in religion. It was the great business of Christ upon earth to procure it. The pardon of sin originates in the free mercy and sovereign grace of God, without respect to anything good in the creature. But we are not to expect pardon from an absolute God. Pardon is an act of justice as well as of mercy. Mercy on God's part, but justice on account of Christ. Another thing is, that it is by faith alone we are made partakers of pardoning mercy. Notice, too, the perfection of pardon, which is expressed by making scarlet as snow, and crimson like wool. We are to understand this of the sinner, not of his sins. Pardon does not alter the nature, or lessen the evil of sin.—G. Burder.

The Doctrine of the Trinity.

"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."—Isaiah 6:3.

This is a great deep where faith must receive mysteries on the authority of God, and reason be satisfied with the fact that He has revealed it. The objection that it is contrary to reason is weak, for nothing can be contrary to reason except what lies within its boundary. This lies in a region far above it. We can only

know so much of God as He reveals. He would not be God if His nature were not mysterious to us. We are mysteries to ourselves. God's works are often mysteries to us. Can we expect to comprehend Himself?

I. The Doctrine Is Interwoven With the Whole Texture of Revelation.—Indications of plurality in unity meet us in the first chapter of the Bible (Gen. 1:26, 27), "Our image." "His image." This becomes more definite as we advance (Num. 6:22-27). Threefold mention of Jehovah, yet "My name" (see Isa. 61:1). These Old Testament indications are remarkable because given to a people prone to polytheism. They are inexplicable except on the ground that a mysterious trinity existed in the unity of the Godhead. This mystery was breaking out amidst the shadows of the darker dispensation. A seed of truth only needing fuller light to develop it. It came out most distinctly in the New Testament. Besides many passages which assert the Deity of Christ and of the Spirit take three cardinal passages (Matt. 3:16, 17, 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). At Christ's entrance on His ministry this truth shines out not so much as dogma but as fact. The very porch of the church, facing the world, has "the name" (not names) of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost inscribed on it. Dedication to the Trinity in baptism is dedication to the one God. The apostolic benediction invokes a Divine blessing from each Person; indicates their equality and their unity.

II. The Scriptures Present This Mystery in a Practical Aspect.—It is interwoven throughout with the living realities of faith; presented to the heart for affectionate embrace, rather than to the head for intellectual apprehension. Explanations of the infinite would be lost on finite minds: so the Bible reveals the Persons of the Trinity, not in their incomprehensible relations to each

other, but in their appreciable relation to us. We find the doctrine underlying every truth, every hope of the Gospel. Take as illustrations Rom. 8:9, 16, 17; 2 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Tit. 3:4-6; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 22:1. Thus each Person co-operates in our redemption: the Father planning, the Son performing, the Spirit applying the work of redeeming love. If angels bowed and adored, with what reverence and gratitude should we exclaim, "Glory be to the Father," &c. 1. How much they reject, who reject the Gospel! A whole Trinity of grace, and love, and power! 2. How much they secure, who embrace the Gospel! What a Father, Saviour, Sanctifier! 3. Not a mere orthodox profession will bless us, but the sanctifying power of this creed in our hearts. Christ found and received by faith, through the Spirit, as the Son of God and our Redeemer, will unlock that mystery to the heart, which is beyond our poor reason to comprehend.—W. P. Walsh.

Man's Energy Put in Place of Trust in God.

"Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia."—Isaiah 8:1.

This comes to view in a more precise translation of the passage. The King of Ethiopia, who was nominally also King of Egypt, alarmed by the near approach of the Assyrians, is aroused to the exhibition of great energy, and sends messengers in the light river-vessels to spread the news through the empire as rapidly as possible, and call the troops of all his dependent nations to his standard. Geikie translates, or paraphrases, the passage thus: "O land of the buzz of fly-swarms—emblems of countless armies—by the rivers of Ethiopia,

which art sending messengers upon the seas, and in swift, light, papyrus boats along all your waters, to gather allies, and muster all the force of your empire: Go back to your homes, ye swift messengers—go back to Ethiopia—the tall and strong race, terrible in war from their rise till now—the nation very strong and all-subduing, whose land is seamed with rivers! Jehovah, alone, will destroy the invader!" The energy of the Ethiopian king is so far commended, but the prophet urges that in this case it is not needed, for God proposes to take to Himself all the glory of driving back the Assyrian invasion.

I. *Man's Energy Is Called For.*—Whatsoever a man findeth to do he should do "with his might," "heartily." Success in life greatly depends on the strength and vigor in our touch of life's duties and claims. Energy includes strength of will, decision, promptness, perseverance, power to overcome obstacles and hindrances, and fertility of resources. Energy is the quality most commended in business life; and it is found to make up for the absence of actual abilities. The man of energy compels life to yield him some of its best. It is thought of as a characteristic of American business life, and is illustrated in the man who put together the blackened rafters and boards of his burnt warehouse, and commenced business again before the great fire was fully quenched, putting up this for a sign, "William D. Kerfoot; all gone, save wife, children, and energy." However much this energy may be a peculiarity of individual disposition, it is also subject to culture, and may be nourished into strength by a firm self-mastery of our life and habits. Exercise thyself thereunto.

II. *Man's Energy Is Consistent With Dependence on God.*—Only the weak man fails to make try harmonise with *trust*. Here the point may

be fully argued and illustrated, that the submission which seeks is no slavish lying down to bear, which is the Islam, or submission of Mohammedanism, but the submission of an active and cheerful obedience, which expects God's will to be *doing* rather than *bearing*, and carries a noble spirit of watching for God and waiting on Him, into every detail of life. To suffer and submit is no very great triumph; to carry the spirit of submission at the heart of our work is the sublime victory of Christian life. And just this is the glory of the energy illustrated in the Apostle Paul. To men's view "beside himself"; his secret this, "To me to live is Christ."

III. *Man's Energy Must Never Be Put in the Place of God.*—But just in this the worldly man is constantly failing. "This is great Babylon, which I have builded." "I will pull down my barns and build greater." "See this business which I have established." "My might, and the strength of my arm, have gotten me this victory." Nothing tends more readily to separate a man from God, and God from a man, than life success attending energy. And of this great peril the Christian man needs to beware. Even he may find that he has dethroned God from the rule of his life, and raised up in his place the old idol of self, dressed in the garments of "energy."

IV. *Sometimes Man's Energy Must Be Put Aside*, that God alone may work.—As in this case, the Ethiopian king must stop his hurrying messengers, and be still; for Jehovah would work the needed rescue. There are times in our lives when we cannot work, when we must not work; and in those times we learn how to put energy and enterprise into their right place. God puts us in His school, and teaches us the hard lesson of practically uniting "energy" with "dependence." And yet this is but the same lesson as joining harmoniously to-

gether "faith" and "works"; or, as the apostle expresses it, "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.—R. Tuck

Infatuation of Sin.

"We have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."—Isaiah 28:15.

In strong, pictorial language the prophet points out—

I. *That Sinful Men Act As if They Could Avert Impending Doom.* They act as if they said, "We have made a covenant with death," etc. Every day the guilty and the foolish are living as if they were possessed with a power to wrestle with and overcome approaching doom. The drunkard seems to say, "I will drink, and not be ruined in health," and the gambler to say, "I will stake money, and not be disappointed"; and the rogue to say, "I will defraud, and not be detected"; and the men who "mind earthly things" to say, "We will invest all our hopes and find all our heritage in this world, and not be robbed of our portion," etc. Such men seem to buoy themselves up with that which, to all that look on, is a transparent infatuation.

II. *That Sinful Men Convince Themselves of That Which They Might Know To Be Wholly False.* They "make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under falsehoods."

1. They choose the wrong course, and tell themselves they are acting under compulsion, and are guiltless.

2. They soften their sin by covering it with some pleasant euphemism.

3. They place between themselves and the condemnation of God the shield of human example, the frequency and popularity of their vice; they screen themselves behind their

brethren, as if God did not see them, and did not hold them guilty.

4. They allow evil practice to beget such obliquity of moral vision that they call good "evil," and evil "good"; they even "glory in their shame," so have they lied unto themselves.

III. *That Sinful Men Act As If They Could Rely on Succour Which Is Worthless.* They stretch themselves on a bed which is too short for their stature; they wrap themselves with clothing which will not cover them (ver. 20). In their weariness they resort to pleasures which do not give them rest, and from which they rise as tired as before. In their sorrow, or in their shame, or in their defeat, they have recourse to comforts which give no heart-ease, and leave them sad and troubled in soul. Many weary years, whole periods of life, even an entire earthly course, will men spend, trying and pitifully failing to console themselves with false comforts, to find rest in excitements, in vanities, and sometimes in vices, which have no power to soothe and satisfy the soul which only truth and love can fill.

IV. *That God Will One Day Arouse Them From Their Guilty Error.* (Vers. 18, 19). The overflowing scourge will come, and will not pass by them; they will be trodden down beneath it. The overwhelming storm will hold them in its embrace of death. The day of disillusion, of self-reproach, of shame, of Divine retribution, will arrive: "Be not deceived (do not deceive yourselves); God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—Wm. Clarkson.

The Lord Our Judge.

"For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us."—Isaiah 33:22.

These four sentences seem to sum up all the great lessons of Advent.

I. *The Lord Is Our Judge*.—That is the beginning, and the condition of all spiritual progress lies in realising the absolute and everlasting distinction between good and bad—the absolute importance of being on the side of good. Christ tells us of the everlasting distinction between those on the right hand and those on the left. Yes, in spite of the vice and wickedness of the good, in spite of the virtues of the bad, there runs a line, invisible, but as profound as can be conceived, in amongst us as we gather together, that distinguishes between those who at the bottom of their wickedness are serving God, and those who, at the bottom, in spite of their attractiveness, are serving their own flesh, their own lusts, and their own selfishness.

The answer to the question "Who among us shall dwell in the everlasting fire?" is, He that walks uprightly; he who has done no wrong; for him this consuming and awful fire of the Divine presence shall be a vision of beauty and of the land that is very far off. But for those who have done wrong, what punishment must it be to simply find themselves in God's presence unfit! They will find nothing else but the everlasting burning and devouring fire, with no other fate than weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those will be the horrible consequences of making the one irretrievable mistake. "The Lord is our judge." That is the beginning—to believe it in our hearts.

II. *The Lord Is Our Lawgiver*.—Surely if God loves us, He must have given us some guidance as to how we should walk, be able to know His character, and to come at last into His presence to behold the King in His beauty. We know God legislated for the people of the old covenant. He was their lawgiver. He

gave them their ceremonial law to know how to approach Him, their social law that they might regulate their social life agreeably to God and for their own well-being. All that has been deepened and sterilised for us into those great moral laws illustrated in the writings of the Bible from our Lord's own character. We know what is right and what is wrong conduct. More than that, the Lord has given us the laws of the Church, the requirements and ordinances whereby those who need education are taught and trained for God. "The Lord is our lawgiver."

III. *The Lord Is Our King*.—That means He requires our deliberate service. In all things, and in all parts of life the kingdom of God is to be promoted. All members of society should realise that because they belong to Christ they are to work for Christ, because they belong to society they are to work for society. "The Lord is our King."

IV. *He Will Come to Save Us*.—If you search into your consciences you know that you want something which your own nature cannot supply, a cleansing profound, which reaches into the very roots of your being. You must be delivered not from the results, but from the very power of sin. "He shall save His people from their sins"—the same Lawgiver, the same King, He is our Saviour—"He will come to save us." He gave not only His love, but Himself.—Bishop Gore.

Highway of Holiness.

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those [or "He shall be with them" if you look in your margins]: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there,

nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isaiah 35:8-10.

Consider some of the characteristics of the life of holiness to which the Prophet here calls our attention, and the conditions which are attached to the right of way.

I. *“The Unclean Shall Not Pass Over It.”* Until we are washed and cleansed from our “old sin” we are not in a position to pass over the King’s highway of holiness. We must pass through the gate before we can pass along the way, and that gate is the Cross, where the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin.

II. *The Highway of Holiness is the Path of “Fellowship with the Divine.”* When Christ was here on earth He ever moved along this way, and He is still to be found there by those who pass it. We may put it thus: Fellowship with Christ is the privilege of those who are wholly consecrated to the Lord, whose supreme desire is to be holy as He is holy; and just in so far as this privilege is actually realised, the soul is more and more completely sanctified by contact with the Divine.

III. *“It is the Way of Right Direction.”* How often in life it seems as if we scarcely know which way to turn; we want to do the right thing, but we hardly know which is the right thing to do. But here is the promise if we are on the King’s highway of holiness, “Though we are fools we shall not err.” The reason why we make such great mistakes as we sometimes do is surely that we get off the King’s highway of holiness. We allow ourselves to aim at some other

object and to be guided by some lower desire.

IV. *It Is the Only Way of Right Direction to Those Who Are “Way-faring Men.”* “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” Do we not sometimes err because we have so little of the wayfaring men about us? We are called to use the world as not abusing it; surely it is the abuse of the world when we allow it to take the place of heaven.

There is a quaint old Latin proverb which tells us “The penniless travellers shall sing before the robber.” No wonder; for what can the robbers take from them? And many a Christian might sing defiance of all enemies—even of the great robber himself—if only we made over our all to its proper Owner, and regarded it as a sacred trust to be used for Him.

V. *It Is Also “the Way of Safety.”* “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon. It shall not be found there.” If you ask for an explanation of this mysterious safety, I point you to the words which follow. It is the way of the redeemed. “The redeemed shall walk there.” Why has Satan no power to do us harm? Because we have been redeemed out of his power. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity. And now that He has redeemed us, we are in a position to claim exemption and immunity, not from Satan’s attacks, but from his tyrannous power over us.

VI. *It Is “a Way of Joy.”* There is no real happiness out of the highway of holiness. Who are the happy Christians? They who follow the Lord fully. Who are the miserable Christians? Those who aim at compromise, who lead a half-hearted life; for the lion can tear and wound them, if not utterly destroy them, as they stray from time to time from the highway of holiness; nor can they enjoy fellowship, for they do not walk

in the light; nor can they be sure of right direction, for "he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

VII. *"It Is the Way That Leads Home."* We are on the King's highway, and every step brings us a little nearer to that home where our own Father lives, and where we shall receive such a welcome as only a Father can give.—W. Hay M. H. Aitken.

The Church and Her Message.

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings."—Isaiah 40:9.

I. *The Thoughts That Cluster Around the Name.*—“O Zion, that bringest glad tidings.” That is almost a definition of the Church; at any rate, it is a description of her by her most characteristic office and function—that which marks and separates her from all associations and societies of men. Her true dignity is that she bears a Gospel in her hand, and grace is poured into her lips. We are to suppose the manifestation and approach of the Divine Deliverer; hence what constitutes Zion the messenger of good tidings is the presence in her of the living God. Translate that into New Testament language, and it just comes to this: that what constitutes the Church the evangelist for the world is the simple possession of Christ, or of the Gospel, and that breaks out into two or three points. 1. Whoever has Christ has the power to impart Him. (1) All property in this world is trust property, and everything that a man knows that can help or bless the moral or spiritual age or intellectual condition of his fellows, he is thereby under solemn obligation to impart. There is an obligation arising from the bands that knit us to one another, so that no man can possess his good alone without being untrue to the

solidarity of humanity. You have got, you say, the remedy, healing for all the diseases of humanity. What would you think of a man who in a pestilence was contented with swallowing his own specific, and, leaving others to die? You have got the Christ, and you have got Him that you may impart Him. (2) It is an obligation that arises, too, from the very purposes of your calling. What are you saved for? For your own blessedness? Yes, and No. No creature in God's great universe but is great enough to be a worthy end of the Divine action. But no creature in God's universe so great as that he is a worthy end of the Divine action, if he is going to keep all the Divine gifts in himself. We are all brought into the light that we may impart light. (3) The very fact of the possession of this Gospel, or of this Christ, for ourselves ought to—and in all healthy conditions will—inspire the impulse to impart. All deep conviction longs to be vocal.

II. We have here, in a very picturesque and vivid form, the setting forth of the *Manner in Which the Evangelist Zion is to Proclaim Her Message.*—The fair-featured herald is bidden to get up into the high mountain, perhaps a mere picturesque detail, perhaps some reference to the local position of the city set upon a hill, like the priests of Ebal or Gerizim, or Alpine shepherds, calling to each other across the valleys, to secure some vantage ground; and, next, to let her voice roll out across the glen. No faltering whisper will do, but a voice that compels audience. “Lift up thy voice with strength.” But a timid heart will make a tremulous voice, and fear and doubt will whisper when courage will ring it out. So “be not afraid”; there is the foundation of the clearness and the loudness with which the word is to be uttered. Our message is to be given with a courage and a force that are

worthy of it. "Be not afraid." That is a lesson for this day. There are plenty of causes of fear round about us, if, like Peter on the water, we look at the waves instead of at the Master. 1. Let us cherish a firm, soul-absorbing confidence in the power and truth of the message we have to tell. 2. Do not let us make too much of the enemy. 3. Let us remember the victories of the past. 4. Above all, let us remember who fights with us.

III. The Substance and Contents of the Evangelist Zion's Message.—"Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" They were to be pointed to a great historical act, in which God had manifested Himself to men; and the words are not only an exclamation, but an entreaty, and the message was to be given to these little daughter cities of Judah as representing all of those for whom the deliverance had been wrought—all which things are paralleled in the message that is committed to our hand. We all have given to us the charge of pointing men to the great historical fact wherein God is visible to men. You cannot reveal God by word, you cannot reveal God by thought. There is no way open to Him to make Himself known to His creatures except the way by which men make themselves known to one another, that is, by their deeds; and so high above all speculation, high above all abstraction, nearer to us than all thought, stands the historical fact in which God shows Himself to the world, and that is in the person of Jesus Christ. How beautiful in that connection the verses following my text are: "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand"; yet "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." And so in that Christ is the power of God, for He is the arm of the Lord; and in that Christ is the gentleness of God; and whilst men grope in the darkness, our business is to point to the living, dy-

ing Son, and to say, "There you have the ultimate, the perfect representation of the unseen God."—A. Mac-laren.

A Model Church.

"So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil."—Isaiah 41:7.

I. It Is a Scene of Activity. We all enjoy activity in the natural world. When the winter frosts have melted, and the streams gush down the mountain-side, and the trees begin to put out their livery of green, we enjoy it. Life is a scene of activity in the physical universe. So it is in the business world. So it is with intellectual activity. The long years of the Middle Ages have passed, and the darkness enveloping Europe lifts up. The printing-press is doing a work beyond that of the old feudal castle. Still more is it the case when there comes spiritual life in a church or in a parish; everybody feels happy.

II. It Is a Scene of Cheerful, Courageous Toil. The carpenter encourages the goldsmith. Many people discourage. The carpenter is querulous, and he says, "Look here, Mr. Goldsmith, I think you had better do your work so." "What do you know about goldsmithing?" says the other. "You are a carpenter; attend to your own business," and thus angry words pass between them. It is so in our churches. "Singing," says one; "what do you know about singing?" "You don't preach quite right," says one. "Would you like to try?" A sensible man says, "I cannot preach; I think my minister knows how to preach, and I will pray for him if he makes a mistake now and then." He knows how to encourage him.

III. It Is a Scene of Prompt Industry and Thorough Work. When a

man gets a reputation for dilatoriness his fate is sealed. The model Church does thorough work, and does it promptly.

IV. They Are All Working for One Common End.—The Church has one end. This man attends to the singing; this man to the children; this man looks after the workingmen's class; this man attends to outdoor relief; another visits the mothers; others attend to this, that, and the other, but they are all working for one end. The Church is a unity—a unity in spirit, in aim, in end.—E. P. Thwing.

Is Christianity a Failure?

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth."—Isaiah 42: 4.

We often hear it said that Christianity is a failure. As if foreseeing this state of mind, two thousand five hundred years ago the prophet sang these sweet notes, saying: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." The purpose of Christ is the conquest of this world, and in carrying out this great work He is not to fail or be discouraged until the system of truth which He teaches is everywhere understood; until the principles of all government shall be brought into harmony with His Word, and men everywhere shall understand and practise the great lessons of truth and holiness. The universality of His kingdom is expressed in the phrase, "Till He hath set judgment in the earth"—in all the then known habitable globe; and, looking beyond to the unknown, or to the men but partly known, the expression is added, "And the isles shall wait for His law"—in other words, the progress of Christ's kingdom should be continually onward until its principles should prevail over all the known kingdoms of the earth,

and the undiscovered portions of it also should receive His law. The work which He proposes to do is a mighty work; and the phrase represents Him as waiting.

I. I Am Not Surprised, However, That Men Are Ready to Say That This Purpose Must Be a Failure; for—1. The aim is so great, the project so vast, that it seems to man impossible. There have been great kingdoms set up on this earth of ours. But there was never a kingdom which reached to its utmost bounds. 2. Men think Christianity must be a failure because the agencies seem inadequate. 3. Because it has not accomplished its work. 4. They tell us that Christianity is likely to be a failure because, they say, there is a conflict between science and religion.

II. Now Let Us Look at This Subject.—It is one of the favourite expressions of these men that in the order of this world there shall be the "survival of the fittest"—that the weaker shall pass away, and the stronger shall remain. Now, if we contrast Christianity with other forms of religion, where shall we find its failure? We may say to-day, simply as a fact, that it still remains, and, surpassing any other system in its strength and beauty, we shall see its survival over all. 1. Compare it with Paganism in its palmiest hours—the days of the philosophy of Greece and the power of Rome, when its temples shone with splendour, when its poets sang with grace, when sculpture and architecture gathered around it their forms of beauty; when it had its legends of mythology; when it had its men of strength and power to be as pillars for it. Scepticism then existed. But all the scepticism of Greece or Rome never closed one temple, never dethroned one of their imaginary deities. In the midst of scepticism popular faith went right on, and the temples had their devotees and worshippers. Judaism taught the

knowledge of the one true God, yet it made no advances against idolatry. On the other hand, idolatry brought its terrible fruits into the midst of Judaism, and the people who had heard the voice of the living God turned and served idols. But what sceptical philosophy could not do, and what Judaism could not do, Christianity has accomplished. Men without earthly power, men persecuted, men in prison, men reproached, went telling the story of a living and dying and ascended Christ, and as they told this story, the temples became deserted and the idols fell, until to-day there is not a god worshipped on earth that was worshipped in the time of the philosophy and glory of Greece and Rome. Christianity is making inroads everywhere. Paganism has gone, Brahmanism is going, and Confucianism is going down. Christianity is just raising herself. 2. But you tell me there is infidelity! And what is infidelity? A negation—a something not a belief. It is a negation of system; it has no system. Where are its temples? Where are its schools? Where are its hospitals? Where were they ever? What did it ever try to do for man anywhere, or in any land, as an organised system? There have been men, strong men, learned men, wise men, who have been infidel; but they have never embodied their creed in an organisation; they have never worked together powerfully for the elevation of the race. I was in Berlin with the Evangelical Alliance. I went to Potsdam to the old palace of Frederick. There we were shown into a room where some of us held our consultations. This was the room where Voltaire studied and wrote part of his works, where he and Frederick deemed they were about to overthrow Christianity. And yet in that very hall we came to consult about the best means of spreading Christianity over the world. Voltaire said he lived

in the "twilight of Christianity," and so he did. But it was not, as he fancied, a twilight deepening into darkness, it was a twilight opening up into the brighter day; and the Sun of Righteousness shines now in spiritual beauty over our entire world. 3. But they tell us sometimes that the discoveries which are being made are unsettling the foundations of Christianity. 4. They tell us that Christianity has not done its work in the time it has run. I admit it. But what about it? These men want time for making this earth. They say it took millions of years. Won't you give me as much time to cure this world and turn sinners into saints as you want to turn a monkey into a man? They demand ages for the one, but are not willing to give us time for the other. The times are full of promise. Christianity is growing stronger.—Bp. M. Simpson.

Evangelical Religion.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—Isaiah 43:25.

Because of texts like this, the early Church called Isaiah the Evangelical Prophet. What does "Evangelical" mean? A "good angel," a "good messenger," bringing good tidings of great joy. All who bring the good tidings from God to sinners are evangelical preachers. All the Bible prophets were evangelical, else they would not have been there. Moses himself was evangelical; even law in the Old Testament has evangelical issues, and Moses was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

I. *The Name Which God Gives Himself.*—"I, even I, am He." You do not find this style save in the Bible. This was God's manner of speech. Baal could not say this, nor

the gods of Egypt. God speaks to you as a man amongst men: "I have something to say to you." When He singles you out, that is often the beginning of personal religion. God speaks to you and me personally; there is none save Jesus Christ between God and myself. Whatever your name is, put it into this text, and lift up your soul in every sentence, making them petitions. Israel had grown weary of God, and had got broken and scattered. Are there not those who are weary of Sabbath services, and wish Monday had come to get back to business? They love entertainments and social gaieties; but tire of Sabbath preaching. Another of Israel's sins is found in the context, "Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money." Did God indeed care for sweet cane? If you go back to chapter III you will find a list of the ornaments and dresses, and what they spent their money upon. Read this and digest it. Bring your bank books and drink books and tobacco books; compare them with what you have contributed to the upholding of evangelical religion. Take your sins to God, and He will blot them out.

II. "*For Mine Own Sake.*"—Not for thy sake; that rather takes a man down. It is all owing to grace. I quite agree to the terms. Pardon my preachings, my sermons, and take me in a pauper. How does that suit your views?—it suits me. In the New Testament we have it put for Jesus' sake; it is the same thing at bottom.

III. "*Will Not Remember Thy Sins.*"—How God forgets, I cannot tell. Isaiah says our sins will never again come up to mind, but I cannot imagine how I can forget my own sins. Some men say they have forgiven you; your offence is dead. It's all past; but you see from the man's eyes that it isn't past, and other people know about it. Take some examples of Jesus' way of forgiveness. You might have said, had you not

known, that the first to meet Him after His resurrection would have been the Virgin, or the women of substance who ministered unto Him. But it was the Magdalene that was the first to gaze on His resurrection form! This was just like Himself. And if Judas had not fallen utterly, and gone to his own place, might he not have been chosen to preach the great coronation sermon of Jesus? Peter, the next great sinner, was chosen. Look how Jesus did: He gets the best service out of sinners, such as I.—A. Whyte.

Immanence of God.

"Is there a God beside me?"—Isaiah 44:8.

In the Christian view of God there are two attributes which it is not easy for the human reason to combine. One of them we call the transcendence of God; to the other we give the name of immanence.

I. *What Do We Mean by the Divine Transcendence.* We mean that apart from and above the universe there lives and reigns a personal Creator.

And what do we mean by the immanence of God? We mean the presence of the Almighty in creation. A God transcendent, like some mighty sculptor, models with His deft hand the human form; but a God who is immanent looks through human eyes, and thinks in the thinking of the human brain.

At different times in the history of man these differing attributes have received special prominence. To-day it is the immanence of God that is claiming the chief thought of Western Christendom. The chief causes of this change are two. The one is the devotion of our age to science, and the other is the modern delight in nature.

II. The Immanence of God Is a Great Truth to Be Grasped Firmly by the Believing Soul; but to say that the immanence of God is everything is to be a traitor to to-morrow.

1. When we deny transcendence, we cease to have a God who is a person. The God of the pantheist may be a flowing stream; He certainly is not a living spirit.

2. The popular pantheism of today is also fatal to human personality. Slip the anchor of the living God, and you slip the anchor of accountability.

3. The popular pantheism of today is certain to put our moral life in jeopardy, for it impairs and must inevitably destroy, the sharp distinction between good and evil. The moral power of the cross of Christ has operated in a twofold way. It has not only made goodness very beautiful. It has also made sin exceeding sinful.

4. It is a bad thing to vilify humanity; I believe it is even worse to deify it. If the life of God be the life of the human race, and the activity of God be man's activity, where is your standard to tell that that is right, and to say with authority that that is wrong?

But some one may perhaps say, What about conscience—is there not always left the voice of conscience? To which we would answer, as Knox did to Mary, "Conscience, madam, requires to be educated." We may picture conscience as a simple thing, but conscience is very far from being simple. It is no more simple than the ear is simple—that outward organ for the voice of God. It has been educated through the stress of years; and it still responds for a period of time to the calling of a faith that is disowned. But the day must come when conscience will grow weak, and fail to pronounce its verdict with authority, unless it is fed again with that same nourishment that has kept

it strong and tender to this hour. There is nothing in an exclusive immanence that has any power to reinforce the conscience. And not only so, but, as has often been noted, the logical outcome is this, that might is right. If God and the life of His universe be one, then the mightier the life, the more of God. There is no room for the baffled and the weak—no place for the useless, the beaten, and the fallen—in a world whose God is but a stream of being which neither can pity nor can love.

III. From All Such Thoughts, Whatever Be Their Charm, Let Us Come Back to the Fatherhood of God. There is transcendence in the thought of fatherhood—the sweet and perfect sovereignty of love. And in fatherhood no less is immanence, for the father's life is in the child, and in ways not less real because they are undefinable, father and child are one.
—G. H. Morrison.

Religious Uses of Memory.

"Remember the former things of old: I am God, and there is none like me."—Isaiah 46:9.

Of all the powers that God has given us, none is more wonderful than memory. For what is memory? It is a twofold power. It is the power that gathers in the past, and crowds into some secret cabinet here the twice ten thousand things that we have learned. And then it is the power that out of that crowded storehouse brings the things forth again, calls them to mind.

I. There Is No Religion Which Lays Such an Emphasis on Memory as Christianity. What do we call Christ's sayings? We call them memorable words. The words of Jesus are like the seal upon the wax. Once stamped with these, and memory will bear them to the end. Christ recog-

nised the character of memory in making His words so memorable as that.

II. Now I Wish to Touch on Three Great Offices of Memory in the Higher Life:—

1. It is memory which helps us to consecrate the world. The hallowing of earth is memory's secret. There are villages sweeter than Stratford, and parks more ancient than the parks of Charlote, but the memories of Shakespeare that cluster there have consecrated these spots for ever.

2. It is an aid to charity. It helps us to understand our friend. It has been said our friends are never ours till we have lost them. It is a strained expression of the certain truth, that of all lights there is none clearer than the light of memory. I cannot judge a man while he is here. Memory redresses things: helps me to see, and know, and understand: lets me do justice to the great, and to the men and women I knew and wronged.

Did you ever regard it as a signal mercy that it is in the light of memory we have to do with Christ? Perhaps you have thought it would be an easier thing to be a Christian if Jesus Christ were here. If I do not know my friend till he is gone, would I have seen the Saviour in a Nazarene? I can look back now. I can appreciate in the light of memory.

3. It helps us to understand ourselves. Only faith and prayer and memory will bring self-knowledge. Faith brings it, for it brings me near to Christ. Prayer brings it, for it shows me what I lack. And memory brings it too.

III. The Kind of Thing That You Remember Best Is No Bad Token of the Kind of Heart You Have.

As life advances memory grows richer. Can it be, then, that in the hour of death the memory of the past is blotted out? It is impossible. It is no power extraneous to myself. It

is part of this immortal me. And when I wake, freed from this hampering body, enlarged and glorified in every faculty, my memory must share in the full tides of life.—G. H. Morrison.

Sudden Destruction.

"Therefore shall evil come upon thee."—Isaiah 47: 11.

The predicted calamity is represented as a great storm, which suddenly arises in eastern countries and blows with such violence as to spread devastation and ruin wherever its fury extends.—R. Macculloch.

FALSE SECURITIES: AN EXPOSURE AND A CHALLENGE

Can you find a solitary instance in which God approved iniquity? Was ever His sword sheathed in presence of evil? This constancy of judgment upon corrupt ways is itself an argument. One act of moral hesitation would have destroyed God! Time cannot modify Divine judgments. What was wrong in Babylon is wrong here: what was right in the most ancient time will be right on the world's last day. We should remind ourselves of these elementary principles; for their very simplicity may cause us to neglect their claims. We shall regard the solemn denunciations as if spoken to our own city.

I. *Look at this Picture of Utter and Most Painful Bewilderment.*—“Evil shall come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.” There are times when the wind seems to be blowing from all quarters at once. There are times when all things seem to have a controversy with us. We set down our feet, and, lo, they are fastened to the ground: we put

forth our hand, and an invisible weapon smites it: we look round, and behold the path is ploughed up, so that there is no way of retreat. We lose our own sagacity. Our wit fails us. Once our mind was quick, now it is dead or helpless. We lose confidence in ourselves; substances become shadows; the strongest of our fortresses melt away; and in our friend's face there are discovered lines of suspicion or of mortal hate. This is the necessary and inevitable result of sin. 1. We have been warned of it. 2. A way of escape has been made.

II. *Hear the Divine Challenge Addressed to the False Powers* in which we have trusted.—“Stand now with thine enchantments,” &c. (ver. 12). Think that we are now called upon to set out in order the false securities in which we have trusted! There is one—Money; there is two—Chance; there is three—Self-confidence; there is four—Atheistic speculation. Now let them do for us all they can. God has challenged them! 1. They ought to be most useful when most needed. 2. They should show their sufficiency by their fearlessness. It is a challenge. I hear the whirlwind coming—get out your money. You thought something would happen—something is happening—God's judgment is descending; where is your God Chance? You have confidence in yourself; be it so; make bare your arm—see, it is but lightning—it is but flood upon flood—it is but world dashing against world, &c. “Let now the astrologers, the star gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.” There is to be a great collision. In that collision only the true can stand.

III. *See the Doom of False Securities*.—“Behold, they shall be as stubble,” &c. (ver. 14). 1. Let no man complain of want of opportunity of observing the value of his moral securities. 2. Let no man complain of

having been allowed to live unwarned. 3. Think of so living that at last a man shall be left without a coal at which to warm himself! This is the end of sin—this is the worthlessness of false gods! So far as we have had experience of life, we have seen the terrible failure of all false things. We have seen the judgment of God in parts. It is not all left to be revealed. We are entitled to reason from the past to the future; and when our own experience has, as a matter of fact, confirmed the revelation of God, we may know that future to be a terrible one to the servants of unrighteousness. What is the duty of man as dictated by mere common sense? It is to seek and trust that which is true. (1) We cannot escape the trial of our securities. (2) If we set ourselves against God, we challenge all the forces of His creation, fire, wind, flood, pestilence, &c. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”—Joseph Parker.

The Satisfaction of the Messiah.

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”—Isaiah 53: 11.

Satisfied! Very few can say that word on this side of heaven. There is no satisfaction for those who are self-centred; and we say reverently that God Himself could not have known perfect blessedness unless He had been able to pour Himself forth in blessing upon others. We might put the truth into four sentences. There is no satisfaction apart from love. There cannot be love for sinning suffering souls without travail. There cannot be travail without compensating joy. In proportion to the travail, with its pangs and bitterness, will be the resulting blessedness.

I. *The Travail of Christ's Soul.*—

He suffered because of His quick sympathy with the anguish that sin had brought to man. He probably saw, as we cannot, the timid oppressed by the strong; the helpless victim pursued by rapacity and passion. He heard the wail of the world's sorrow, in which cries of little children, the shriek or moan of womanhood, and the deep bass of strong men wrestling with the encircling serpent-folds, mingle in one terrible medley. He sighed over the deaf and dumb, had compassion on the leper, wept at the grave. As the thorn-brake to bare feet, so must this world have been to His compassionate heart. He must also have suffered keenly by the rejection of those whom He would have gathered, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but they would not. But these elements of pain are not to be compared with that more awful sorrow which He experienced as the substitute and sacrifice of human guilt. It could not be otherwise. He could not have loved us perfectly without becoming one with us in the dark heritage of our first parent. Dost thou love Christ? The first duty He will lay on thee will be love to others. And if thou dost truly love, thou too shalt find thy meed of soul-travail.

II. *The Certainty of Infinite Compensation.*—"He shall see." It is impossible to suffer voluntarily for others, and not in some way benefit them. Thy pain may sometimes seem abortive—the mighty throes that rend thee for the souls of others appear in vain; but it is not really so. Drop by drop thy tears shall presently turn the scale. Patience shall have her perfect work. The laws of the harvest in this sphere are as certain in their operation as in that of nature.

III. *The Nature of Christ's Compensation.*—It will come—1. In the glory that shall accrue to the Father. 2. In the redemption of untold myriads. Great as the harvest of sin has

been, we believe that the saved shall vastly outnumber the lost. Nothing less will satisfy Christ. Remember that in the first age, before mention is made of the latter triumphs of the Gospel, John beheld in heaven a multitude which no man could number. 3. In the character of the redeemed. He shall present them to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. 4. In the destruction of the devil's work. What is involved in the majestic promise that He should destroy the works of the devil is not yet made manifest. In due time we shall see it all.

IV. *The Greatness of Those Results.*—1. They must be proportionate to the glory of His nature. It is not difficult to satisfy, at least temporarily, a little child. But as its nature develops it becomes increasingly hard to content it. But surely there is more difference between the capacity of an angel and that of a man than between the capacities of a man and a babe. But great as an angel is, his capacity is limited and finite. What then must be the measure of that blessedness, of that harvest of souls, of that result of His travail, which can content the Divine Redeemer? 2. They must be proportionate to the intensity of His suffering. The results of God's work are always commensurate to the force He puts forth. You cannot imagine the Divine Being going to an immense expenditure without a sure prescience that He would be recouped. Satisfied! We shall hear His sigh of deep content, and see the triumph on His face. And if Christ is satisfied, we shall be. On this let us rest.—F. B. Meyer.

The Need and Nature of Conversion.

"*Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts.*"
—Isaiah 55:7.

This is not a merely legal demand; it is a Gospel demand, found in the centre of a Gospel chapter in the writings of the most evangelical of all the prophets.

I. *The Necessity of Conversion.*—“Right about face!” is the marching order for every sinner. 1. This will be at once evident when I ask, How would it be consistent with the holiness of God for Him to put aside our past sin, and then to allow us to go on sinning as we did before? 2. Neither is there a single case in fact, nor one emblem in parable, that would lead any man to hope that he could keep his sins and yet be saved. 3. Besides, our common-sense tells us that it would be highly dangerous to society if men were to be pardoned and yet were not to be renewed in character and life. 4. Moreover, it would be a serious injury to the man himself. I have come to the conclusion that the very worst form of character is produced in the man who, for some reason or other, thinks himself to be a favourite of Heaven and yet continues to indulge in sin.

II. *The Nature of this Conversion.*—How is it described here? 1. It deals with the life. “Let the wicked forsake his way.” It is “his way” that he is to forsake; that is, his natural way, the way in which he says he was brought up, the way that his natural affections, and propensities, and passions lead him. He must forsake this way, even though it is the way in which he has walked these thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, or even eighty years; he will have to get out of this way, however much he may delight in it. “I will tell you what I will do,” says one; “I will still keep to my old way, but I will not travel quite so rapidly in it; I will not live such a fast life as I have done.” I tell thee that thou must forsake that old way of thine altogether if thou wouldest be saved. “That is pretty strong language,” says

some one. Do you think so? I shall have to use still stronger expressions presently, for the next point concerning the nature of this repentance is that—2. It deals with the man’s thoughts. In thought is often the very essence of sin. A deed might in itself be colourless; but the motive for doing it—the thought at the back of it—puts the venom, and virus, and guilt into the deed. As that is the case, what sort of thoughts must the unrighteous man give up? He must give up a great many fine opinions of which he is very proud; his opinion about God, for instance. To the ungodly man it is often quite a treat to sit down and think of what he calls the jolly days of his youth, when he sowed his wild oats. We must also forsake our thoughts in the sense of turning from all purposes of evil. That, indeed, is the main meaning of the Hebrew word used here: “Let the unrighteous man forsake his purposes.” You say that you will do this or that, without any thought of whether God would have it so or not. Possibly it is your purpose, as you express it, “to have your fling.” You have come up from the country, young man, you are pleased that you have got away from your mother’s apron-strings, and now you are going to have your own way. Forsake all such thoughts, I implore you. 3. The text further says, “and let him return unto the Lord,” so that this conversion deals with the sinner in his relation to God. He who would find mercy must return to God to obtain it. (1) You must begin to think about God. (2) Then you must yield to Him, give up your will to His will; and, doing that, you must pray to Him, cry to Him for mercy; and then you must trust Him. Especially, you must accept His way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

III. *The Gospel of This Conversion.*—Possibly somebody says, “You have been preaching to us the law,

sir." No, I have not. The law says nothing about repentance. The law curses you from the very first moment when you have broken it. That gracious message, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," is not the utterance of law, but of the Gospel. 1. The Gospel of it lies in the fact that God has promised that He will abundantly pardon those who turn from their evil ways. 2. Not only does God bid men turn to Him, but He enables them to turn to Him; so the Gospel of this passage is, that God the Holy Ghost is freely given to sinners to turn them, first in their hearts, and then in their lives. 3. Jesus Christ Himself came into the world on purpose that this Divine Spirit might be given in connection with the exercise, by men, of faith in Him. 4. God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to offer a full and complete atonement for sin.—C. H. Spurgeon.

Guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"The Lord shall guide thee continually."—Isaiah 58: 11.

In very deed the promise given to God's people by Isaiah of old is fulfilled in the Christian Church; and as we live our lives in union with Jesus we are called on to live them under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

I. *Jesus Is Our Director.* Notice how truly His direction supplies our need.

1. The first qualification which a wise director must possess is knowledge—a threefold knowledge. (1) He who would direct me aright must know clearly what it is that God wills me to be, he must have a clear apprehension of the end of my life. (2) He must know the nature of the one he guides. (3) He must have a

continuous knowledge of the external circumstances of my life.

2. Firmness. Jesus Christ is firm; most tender, most patient, most constant, yet most firm.

3. We need sympathy also in our director; we need one who will feel with us as he guides us along the road which leads to eternal life. For of necessity this road is the Via Crucis, there is no other way which can bring us to the haven where we would be.

II. *Notice How He Directs Us;* it is by the ministry of the indwelling Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? You know full well that He is the Third Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity. Yet there are many who practically think of the Holy Ghost as simply an influence coming forth from the Father and the Son. We can put this easily to the test. How often do you offer in your devotions direct adoration to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer thanksgiving to the Holy Ghost? How often do you offer direct prayer to the Holy Ghost? If direct worship of the Holy Ghost is lacking from our devotions, is it not because the verity of His Divine Personality is not really laid hold on by us?

God the Holy Ghost is in us. Why? To lead us as our indwelling Guide. "Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness." Such was the ancient cry, and that cry has been answered in an arresting manner in the Church of God. Speaking to His Apostles on the night of His betrayal, Christ uses these words about the Holy Ghost: "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Of old He was with them, guiding them from without, but now He is in us, guiding us from within; and this is the essential condition of all true Christian liberty, that we are taught by an indwelling Teacher and guided by an indwelling Guide.

How does He guide us? Not by

sensible visions and signs. 1. He guides us first by His action on our minds; He instils into them holy thoughts; He reveals truth after truth, each of which calls for moral correspondence. 2. He acts not only on our minds, but on our hearts. 3. He acts upon our wills. 4. He guides us by acting upon our conscience.

III. Practical Rules to Help You in Living This Guided Life:—

1. We must obey our Lord's call promptly.
2. Our Lord's calls must be fully responded to.
3. When Christ calls we must respond perseveringly.—George Body.

Jehovah Our Redeemer.

"Our Redeemer from everlasting is thy Name."—Isaiah 63: 16.

If we wish to learn the full content of these terms "Redeemer," "redemption," as descriptive of Christ's salvation, we must go back to their earliest use in the Old Testament revelation. For Isaiah, we must not forget, was a Jew, and his prophecy in the first instance was delivered to Jews. And when he used this word "Redeemer," and told the Jews that "Goel" or "Redeemer" was Jehovah's name from of old, the ideas which both he and his hearers would attach to the word would be the ideas which were attached to it in its common use in their law.

I. The Law Concerning the Redeemer Thus Involved These Particulars as Belonging to His Office.

1. The redeemer must be near of kin.
2. The duties of the kinsman-redeemer were three. If any of his brethren had through poverty been dispossessed of his inheritance, the redeemer was to buy it back with a price and reinstate his poor brother therein. If, worse yet, any of his

poor brethren had through stress of poverty sold himself into slavery, the kinsman-redeemer was to buy him out of his slavery by giving a price to the master and set him free again. If, finally, any of his brethren should be maliciously slain, it was his duty to "redeem his brother's blood," as the phrase was; to redeem his brother's blood by slaying the murderer.

II. And Now, in the Light of This History, We Come Back to the Text, "Our Redeemer" from everlasting is Thy Name!"

The word plainly contains a prediction of the Incarnation. For to Hebrew thought there was no such thing known as that a redeemer should be other than a kinsman. They also teach the voluntariness, and thus the grace of the great salvation. For while the avenging of blood was a command laid on the next of kin, it was not so with the redemption of persons or possessions. The word is not "he shall," but "he may."

Further, the text shows what is included in Christ's work as Redeemer.

We are reminded, then, that Christ's work as Redeemer involves first of all the redemption of our persons. That the sinner is, by reason of his sin, fallen into bondage is one of the most familiar thoughts of Scripture. The Scripture represents this bondage as fourfold. There is a bondage to the law. There is also a bondage to sin, in which we have been bound. We are in bondage to the power of sin, and from this Christ came to set us free. We have also been redeemed by Christ from the bondage to death in which we were aforetime. But there is also bondage to Satan, and from this bondage also Christ's work as our Kinsman-Redeemer has freed us.

III. He Was Also to Redeem His Brother's Inheritance and Reinstate Him in It.

This word Redeemer, illumined by that old Mosaic law, manifestly bears

in its bosom the promise of resurrection from the dead. For the Levitical goel did not buy back the lost estate of his impoverished brother that he might himself enter into it and enjoy it. No. He bought it back for that poor brother. So it follows from this text that those whom Jehovah Jesus redeems must be reinstated in the inheritance from which they have been cast out.

IV. The Redeemer Was, in Virtue of His Office, the Avenger of Blood. Christ, then, not although Redeemer, but because He is Redeemer, must be the Avenger of blood. It is, therefore, just because Christ is Redeemer that He will yet destroy—as it is written that He shall destroy—him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and cast him into the lake of fire.—S. H. Kellogg.

JEREMIAH

The Way of Contrition.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."—Jeremiah 50:4, 5.

Our spiritual life as a life of contrition is typified for us in the return of the children of Israel to Jerusalem from their long exile in Babylon.

I. Of Necessity, Contrition Must Be the First Stage of Spiritual Life. For what is contrition? The Bible definition of contrition is, sorrow, sorrow that is in union with God. Contrition is no passing paroxysm, it is a state of abiding spiritual sorrow; we are taken by the Spirit of God into union with God, and therefore the Spirit of God is ever acting upon our mind and heart and will.

In its essence, contrition is the virtue that unites the sinner's will with the Will of God. Sin, in its essence, is the variance of the will of the creature from the known Will of the Creator. As a necessary consequence,

therefore, sin involves spiritual death. And equally of necessity, contrition involves the recovery of life.

II. Let Us See How the Spirit Leads Us Along This Tear-stained Path of Penitence.

1. It is generally recognised that there are two distinct stages in the contrite life. The first is the stage of initial contrition; it is that stage into which we pass by spiritual awakening, and out of which we pass when, through the tasting of the Divine forgiveness, we enter into the peace of God. In other words, initial contrition is the contrition which precedes and leads up to a true conversion.

2. But this is a transitory stage. Does contrition then come to an end after the message of forgiveness is heard and believed in? Is the sinner set free from the guilt of sin in order that he may go forth and forget it? No, this cannot be the case, unless he is lacking in all true generosity. In every generous heart this will be the resolve: Because God forgives me so freely, I will never forgive myself; so that instead of forgiveness drying up the sorrow of contrition, it has upon it a double effect—it takes out of it every low and selfish element, and it intensifies our sorrow instead of making it cease to be.

III. So the Spirit leads us along the path of contrition, and we see that our spiritual life as lived under the guidance of the Living Jesus must be always *a life of sustained contrition*, a contrition not only deepened and intensified, but continuous. And this for many reasons.

1. Our sin is continuous.
2. We carry into our new life a

great deal of what we contracted in our evil past.

3. When we pass into union with God we do not cancel the influence which thoughtlessly or deliberately we used against Christ in our past days of disobedience.

Surely of us, as of Israel of old, it should be true that we "go upon our way weeping."—George Body.

EZEKIEL

Original Sin.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
—Ezekiel 18:4.

I. *Sin*, in one and that perhaps the most important of its aspects, is conscious disobedience to a law whose authority we recognise as binding us. Such disobedience will weaken, not only the will of the sinner himself, but the will of his descendants when their turn comes to combat the forces of evil. And this weakness and waywardness of the will in its warfare with the passions is what has been called by theologians, though the phrase has no Scriptural authority, original sin. It may perhaps be said that the phrase is not a very happy one; it is likely to mislead the unwary. For sin is essentially a personal, conscious act.

Ezekiel declared to the Jews with no uncertain voice the sublime principle by which the world is judged: All souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. To God is each soul responsible at last.

II. *But the Taint of Sin Is Present.* Whence comes it? Are we to regard it as a Divine punishment? Nay; it is the consequence of the unity of mankind. Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sin-

ners. Could we explain it better? Not that we are punished for Adam's sin; there is no such statement in Scripture. No; but we suffer through Adam's sin, inasmuch as we are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. We suffer doubly, alike in our bodies and in our souls.

We suffer in our bodies. Is it not obscurely hinted by St. Paul that physical disorder is the offspring of moral disorder? Death came through sin, he says. The true significance of pain may be that it is the symbol and the token of sin; the suffering in the world may be the consequence, though not the chastisement, of Adam's transgression.

The infection of sin is with us, for as members of the great human family we have shared in Adam's sin. We have inherited the taint, although we are not responsible for it; it has never been in our power to refuse the inheritance. And so we see that the really practical question for us all is as to the source and the measure of our power of resisting this deadly tendency.

III. *Can It Be Resisted, and How?*

Ezekiel urges upon the Hebrews that the pollution of sin is not hopeless. The burden of his exhortation is that the wicked man may turn away from his wickedness and live, that repentance and recovery are within

man's power. Here is man; what is his inheritance? The nature of Adam? True; but behind and beyond that he has inherited the image of God. With the tendency to do wrong, man has also received the power to do right. He is not the son of Adam only, but the son of God; and in the power of that Divine inheritance he may overcome.—J. H. Bernard.

Divine Forces and Human Agents in Retribution.

"Fill thy hands with coals of fire between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city."—Ezekiel 10: 2.

This is part of another vision of the judgment that would come on the city because of its notorious sins. In this vision there is very much that there was in the first Ezekiel had already beheld on the plains of Chebar. It is substantially a renewal of the former vision, though differing as to the locality where the manifestation was given, and the action with which it was accompanied. Without noting now what has been contemplated before, we fix our attention on the one part of the vision that revealed coals of fire, and a hand scattering these coals over the city. The sinners in Zion were already slain; their carcasses are seen lying throughout the streets of the city, and some of them were defiling the sacred house where the abominations had been practised. Now the fire was to be scattered over the city to reduce the whole to ashes. This fire was one of the forces of nature, for it is represented as among the wheels, which are the symbols of the powers of nature; and it is scattered by a man's hand, indicating that human agency would use this divine force for the punishment and purification of the city. The immediate meaning of the vision was that the Chaldeans would burn the city that

sinned, but the permanent and universal teaching may be—

I. *That There Are in the Economy of God Terrific Forces for the Destruction of Evil.* The whirling globe of fire was but a symbol of the manifold elements that, through processes of pain and, it may be throes, of agony, have punished and will punish sin. And very often those elements are just those that have been guiltily used by man. It was true of these Jews "that they had abused fire to maintain their gluttony, for fulness of bread was one of their sins; they burned incense to idols, and abused the altar fire which had been the greatest refreshing to their souls, and now even this fire kindled upon them." Thus indeed is it clearly taught in the prediction of Christ, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword," that the implements of our evil become the engines of our punishment. And such engines have terrific force. Fire is the emblem of God and of His Christ in their relation to sin. In the Apocalypse Christ appeared like a man of fire. And it is written to show the vehemence of God's hatred, and the energy of God's opposition, and the completeness of God's victory over sin, "our God is a consuming fire." The fact that such forces, even the great force of all forces, God, is thus against sin should lead us: 1. To avoid sin ourselves; 2. To believe in the final victory of goodness.

II. *That the Great Forces Provided Against Evil Will Often be Used by the Instrumentality of Man.*

A man's hand was to scatter these coals of retribution. Thus it commonly is. As man is the tempter, so is man frequently the punisher of man. Chaldean armies are instruments of divine righteousness. Human judges are often the swords of God: human revolutionists the vindicators of liberty against despots. Wonderful is the sphere of man in

the divine arrangements. There are mystic cherubim, and dreadful wheels, and whirling globes of fire, but there is amid all a man's hand. It is for this hand sometimes to scatter the fires of retribution; but ever to scatter the fires of purification. The consuming of the sin—sin in thought, sin in feeling, sin in habit, rather than retribution on the sinner, may perhaps be the higher and better teaching of this vision for all of us.

*"Up then in virtue's manly part,
From grey-beard elf to fiery youth:
And on the nation's naked heart
Scatter the living coals of truth."*

—Urijah R. Thomas.

A Vision of Divine Judgment.

"Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south."—Ezekiel 20:45; 21:32.

Though the style in which this vision is recorded is so abrupt and enigmatical that critics have considered this one of the most obscurely rendered passages of the entire book of Ezekiel, we nevertheless need not find it difficult to discover what, as a whole, is its local and temporary, and what its universal and eternal teaching.

Looking first at its primary application, we find that, in fulfilment of one grand function of the prophetic office, Ezekiel is commissioned to bring the mind and conscience of the terribly depraved Jewish people under the power of the future. That future will express the judgments of God. By judgments we are to understand the opinions of God, uttered not so much in words as in events; and those events would seem a natural part of human history. Such events in such a future would make clear the ver-

dict of eternal righteousness and infinite goodness upon the defilement, and cruelties, and profanities of the people. There is an energy of Divine emotion, as though the very hands of God smote together in earnestness. The prophet, also, is in an agony of earnestness, as he seeks to let the people understand the Divine thought and feeling about them. In his endeavour he labours to bring all their history under the power of the future. For this, five distinct historic periods are rehearsed in order: the first, when the Lord came to visit the children of Israel in Egypt; the second, when they were brought into the wilderness; the third, when, near the close of their sojourn there, a new generation had come into being; a fourth, when they were settled in the land of Canaan; and the last, the period comprehending the generation now addressed by the prophet. There is to be an inquest on these five periods. Because of the crimes therein exposed, there looms over the nation a future full of evil omen. In striking figures the vision discloses more clearly and more terribly than the people had yet been told the approaching invasion and conquest of Judæa by the Chaldean forces—forces symbolised by vehement flame and ruthless sword. Under these retributive forces all would come. The forest of human life, whether young or old, evil or good, would suffer in this fire. The king would be led a helpless captive to Babylon, and so, though not slain, would very literally come under the power of this sword. All the distinction that peculiarly belonged to them as a people would be subverted. There would be no regal or priestly glory left—none to govern man, none to intercede with God. Yet the proclamation of God's dealings has goodness mingled with the severity. For the prostration and ruin will be only for a time. There will be a gradation and a long continuance in the

processes of revolution and ruin, but through them all God will be preparing and disciplining the people. The time of trouble is a "trial" time, and in the trial varnish and glitter will disappear, the unreal will give way to the real. Such trial time will go on till He comes who is the right owner of power and glory, and who will transform all that was only material, and therefore shadow, into the spiritual, and therefore substantial and abiding glory. The true priestly dignity and the true royal splendours will have not so much their restoration as their adequate and permanent realisation in the Messiah. Great is the contrast between the destiny of Judah and that of Ammon. Though at one crisis it seemed uncertain which of the two the Chaldean forces would first assail, and though both suffered alike under their scathing and crushing invasion, yet the final destiny of the two stands in prophetic vision, as in historic record, in stern and sharp contrast. For through the awful process of deep humiliation and indescribable misery Judah reached the consummation of its glory. "But for Ammon, because of its scornful spirit, there is no such perspective of future recovery; it perishes without hope. To the Ammonites as a people this was only the beginning of troubles, for they never attained again to political power and importance; they gradually dwindled away, till their separate existence ceased and their place was no more known."

All this at first in vision, and more fully in the history that is the best commentary of prophecy, clearly teaches such universal and eternal lessons as—

I. *Divine Judgment Is a Terrific Fact.* God has His ideas about conduct; has a care about His moral universe. His ideas, when uttered in what we solemnly call judgments, are appropriately uttered. There is the fitting tone; the appropriate empha-

sis. For sins against light, and privilege and grace, the fitting tone, the appropriate emphasis of the Divine idea, may often be fire and sword. Human thoughts are often so unimportant that they are not expressed in words. Human thoughts that are convictions are uttered even by uncultured lips with an eloquence that proves them to be real; but perhaps the profoundest human thoughts are those that come out in deeds and live and pulsate long after winged words have vanished in the air. God's thoughts about character have not only had an utterance—an utterance in words that are unmatched in language—but also, because these thoughts possess Him, because this care about goodness is the very breath of His being, they have been uttered in deeds. The flood in Noah's time, the fire on the cities of the plain, the destruction of Jerusalem, the death of the Saviour, the ghastly mysteries of hell, all (as do ten thousand events in what is called profane history) utter God's judgments on evil.

II. *Divine Judgment Wrought by Human Agency.* The Chaldean armies unconsciously uttered the thought of the Lord of the whole earth about the idolatry, the gross immorality of the people they invaded. So human judges, and parliaments, and kings; so also the frown of friendship, the hiss of outraged conscience in the home, or the Church, or the State; so also the pursuit of the police detective, and the grip of the gaoler; so also the revolutions of nations, and the catastrophes of commerce, may all, however blindly, be human agents in Divine retribution. As we have noticed in earlier visions, we note again, Nebuchadnezzar's sword and fire were the very sword and fire of God.

III. *Divine Judgments Marked by Naturalness.*

What more natural than that an ambitious neighbouring nation should

take advantage of the utter demoralisation, party strife, degraded life, and departing prestige of a people, and should come and invade and conquer them? Such a history as the Jews had had—as summed up by Ezekiel in his narration of the five epochs—naturally would lead to their internal disorganisation and their being the ready prey of the besiegers. And let a man recall his life, break it up into the seven ages Shakespeare depicts, and he will find the resultant of the sins of each age in the retribution he has to suffer. The sinner finds, as has been strikingly said, that just as by abusing the body he brings a curse on it, so by abusing the soul. "All things that God has ordained, the laws of the human body, the laws of the human soul, the laws of society, the laws of all heaven and earth, are arrayed against thee; for thou hast arrayed thyself against them."

IV. Divine Judgment Is Very Comprehensive in Its Influence.

It has been eloquently written by Dean Stanley that the "doctrine of the responsibility of the individual soul, separate from the collective nation, separate from the good or ill deserts of ancestry, acquires in Ezekiel's hands the newest developments. The note which is struck for a moment by Jeremiah is taken up by Ezekiel with a force and energy which makes his announcement of it ring again from end to end of his writings." But though this is true it is equally evident that Ezekiel teaches that the sins of the nation involve in suffering all the people. This principle can be proved 1. historically, 2. philosophically, 3. morally. It is in accordance with historic facts, philosophic theory, and moral rectitude, that man should bring blessing or evil upon his fellow man. This fact, first, illustrates the extent of human influence; second, suggests the accountability of man to man for his moral conduct.

V. Divine Judgment Benevolent in Its Purposes.

Here we are taught 1. That the revolutions of life are under Divine control. It is God who overturns. 2. That the result of these revolutions will be the victory of righteousness. The issue of successive overturnings will be the enthroning of the Rightful King. This is true in individual as well as in natural life. All the processes of repentance and doubt, of spiritual and of mental struggle, are designed by God to lead not to perpetual anarchy and revolt, but the rest and peace of submission to Christ. What St. Augustine taught may really be taken as the cry of the race and of the individual. "Thou hast made me for Thyself: my heart is restless, and cannot find rest, till it rests in Thee."—Urijah R. Thomas.

God's Desire for the World's Salvation.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."—Ezekiel 33: 11.

This is a Divine oath. God swears by his own life (Heb. 6:13). This shows how certain are the words spoken, how earnestly God desires men to accept them, and how difficult it is for men to believe them.

I. Men Have Found It Difficult to Believe That God Has No Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked.—Doctrines of reprobation were once popular. People thought that God destined the greater part of mankind to eternal misery before they were born, in order to magnify His own glory. The heathen have had ideas of gods who delighted in blood. Christians have thought that there is a certain Divine satisfaction in taking vengeance on the sinner. Consider the causes of these views. 1. Divine warnings God warns sternly. Hence He is

thought to will harshly. It is supposed that He desires to do what He threatens. 2. The analogy of human passions. With man "revenge is sweet." Therefore it is thought to be so with God. Men act too much in order to please themselves. Therefore they imagine that God does the same. 3. The experience of Divine judgments. They are at times so sweeping and wholesale, and escape from them seems to be so hopeless, that their victims are tempted to regard them as the outcome of God's own desires.

II. It Is a Fact That God Has No Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked.—1. This is positively affirmed. Here it is stated on oath. No truth of revelation is more clear or positive than this. 2. It is true to the character of God. God is love, and love can have no pleasure in suffering and death. God is our Father, and a true father can have no pleasure in the death of his children. 3. It is confirmed by the action of God, who has sent His Son to save the world. While death is the wages of sin, the gift of God is the opposite—eternal life. The New Testament is a grand contradiction to theological pessimism.

III. The Death of the Wicked Is Due to Their Own Wills.—“Why will ye die?” He wills to die who wills the means of death. The man who takes poison takes his life. When the process is revealed this is done openly. When it is not seen it is still done. The sinner then wills his own death, though unwittingly, by deliberately choosing the course that will certainly issue in it. Now, this is a matter of a man's own volition. So absolute is the territory of will that the wicked may yet die in their sins, although God not only does not desire their death, but earnestly desires their salvation. The awful freedom of man's will—this is the rock on which universalism breaks.

IV. God Entreats Men to Turn and

Live.—1. It is possible for all to live. As the sinner chooses his own death, so the means of life-deliverance are within his reach. He cannot save himself, but he may choose whether he will be saved. 2. The condition of life is conversion. “Turn ye from your evil ways.” This is true repentance. It means more than regretful tears. It takes place in the will, not merely in the emotions. A tearless change is true conversion, while weeping without change is worthless sentiment. Yet this does not require perfect conquest of evil and a full recovery from it before God will have mercy. We are to turn round. The progress up the hill to light and life has yet to be made. Repentance sets our faces in the right direction. 3. God urges and entreats sinners to turn and live. This shows (1) their great danger; (2) God's wonderful compassion and love; and yet (3) the difficulty of inducing men to repent. Thus God still pleads in infinite pity with His lost children. Happy are they who hear His gracious call and respond to it!—W. F. Adeney.

A New Heart.

“*A new heart also will I give you.*”
—Ezekiel 36:26.

1. The Great Gift.—The heart is the nature in the sacred terminology of this text. God promises a new inner nature to His people.

1. This is a needed gift. The heart is the root and fount of all things. With what finality and power our Lord described the fundamentality of the heart! “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings.” And the Bible is equally thorough in all its teachings. Always its deep solicitude is concerning the heart. Hence all manner and types of heart are described in Scrip-

ture: a "wicked heart," a "pure heart," a "true heart," a "broken heart," a "clean heart," a "perfect heart."

We see, too, the deep necessity of this gift when we realise our sinfulness. In this very verse, God delineates our heart as it now is. He describes it as a "stony" heart. Bishop Lightfoot in pathetic apostrophe speaks of "my sullied heart," and he speaks for us all.

2. A new heart can only come as a Divine gift. "I" will give you it, saith Jehovah.

And what a precious gift this is! In a new heart lies the secret of a wealthy inner life. All generous impulses, all sublime ideals, all lofty and strenuous purposes depend upon a new heart.

The secret of a noble outer life lies here also. All outflowing of goodness is from this fountain alone.

3. It is an assured gift. God speaks without reservation. He says He "will" give it, and He will give it "you." It is assured to all who desire it.

II. The Great Giver's Mode of Bestowing This Gift.

1. God delights to give by promise. Faith is God's stern and imperative and constant demand. To faith and faith alone His riches come. And yet faith itself is His gift—so entirely do we live under grace.

2. God gives this glorious gift instrumentally. He gives a new heart by means of prayer.

God gives this gift by the Holy Spirit. He says in the following verse, "And I will put my spirit within you." When we are "born again" we are born of the Holy Spirit.

God gives this gift by means of His Word. But God also uses His Word as preached as an agency for the imparting of this gift. This is the supreme purpose of preaching.

Devout reading is often used of God for the giving of a new heart.

All the means of grace are sanctified of God to the same noble purpose.

By very varied means God fulfils His Word and gives His people a new heart. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel to what are accustomedly called the means of grace.—Dinsdale T. Young.

A New Heart.

"A new heart also will I give you."

—Ezekiel 36:26.

We are here introduced to one of those profound utterances in which the Old Testament anticipates some of the richest truths of the New. The grace here promised was doubtless given in all ages to those who truly repented and sought it. But reading these words in the light of the Gospel, we are able to see much more clearly what is their eternal significance.

I. *The Essence of Salvation Is the Renewal of the Heart.*—The commonest mistake is to ignore this most significant fact. People regard salvation too much as a change in the soul's estate rather than a change in its very nature. But while there is a change of condition, and while the greatest possible external consequences flow from the redemption of souls, that redemption does not consist in these things; they are but of secondary importance. The primary fact is internal. To be saved from the visible fires of a material hell, and to be carried aloft to the tangible pleasures of a celestial Paradise may satisfy the Mohammedan-minded Christian, but it will not fulfil the great thought of Christ. Hearts are wrong, foul, diseased. Men have false ideas, corrupt desires and affections, evil imaginations, or perhaps a blank deadness of soul. Here is the seat of the disease; here, then, the cure must begin. Sin is heart-disease; salvation is heart-renewal.

II. The Old Evil Heart Is of Stone.—A terrible and most significant description. 1. It is *hard*. It does not respond to the call of God; it neither perceives spiritual truth, nor feels Divine influences, nor responds to heavenly voices. It has no sympathy with God. It is inflexible and immobile. 2. It is *cold*. Not only does it not respond to the influences of God; in itself and in its new condition it is unfeeling. There is no glow of generous affection in the sinful heart. 3. It is *dead*. The heart is the most vital organ. For this part of the body to be petrified involves a fearful condition of utter death. The hands might be turned to stone, and yet the man might live. But if he had a heart of stone he must be dead. Souls are "dead in trespasses and sin" (Eph. 2:1). Men fear a future death, but the Bible teaches that there is a present death of godless souls. 4. It is *unnatural*. A heart of stone—what can be more monstrous? Sin is all unnatural. It is contrary to nature not to have feelings of love for our heavenly Father.

III. God Gives a New Heart of Flesh.—1. It is a new heart. There is no curing the old one. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3). To be in Christ is to be "a new creature." Thus Christ gives complete renewal.

Now, the hope of the world lies in this great fact. We try to patch up the face of society, but it is mortifying at the core; and Christ goes at once to the root of the matter. With creative power he makes the heart afresh, i.e., he gives quite new thoughts, feelings, and desires. The most abandoned wrecks of society may take courage and believe that even they can be saved if this is the glorious work of Christ in souls. 2. It is a heart of flesh. (1) *Tender*. The old coldness and hardness pass away. Pride, stubbornness, obstinacy, are broken down. The penitent soul is melted. The softening of the hardened spirit is an essential part of conversion. (2) *Sympathetic*. The renewed heart readily answers to the call of God and to the joys and sorrows of men. (3) *Living*. This new heart beats. It drives life-blood through the whole being. The fainting soul is invigorated. Energy springs from the new heart. It pulsates with the vigour of a glad, strong life. (4) *Natural*. The heart is of flesh, not of some foreign angelic substance. Sin is monstrous, goodness natural. The true Christian is natural; he is intensely human. God's work in the soul brings a man into close sympathy with his fellows. It restores true human nature.—W. F. Adeney.

DANIEL

Prayer for Pardon.

"Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant."—Daniel 9:17.

In its tone and character, the ends it seeks and the pleas it urges, this prayer of Daniel's may be regarded as a model prayer for the forgiveness of sins.

I. Its Character.—The very atmosphere of this prayer is purifying and inspiring. It is marked by several important characteristics. 1. *Confession*. It follows a confession of sin (vers. 5-8), and frankly admits that the present calamities are the merited consequences of sin (ver. 16). Forgiveness is only possible after repentance (Acts 3:19) and confession (1 John 1:9). 2. *Earnestness*. This is

the most striking feature of the prayer. Its short passionate phrases, its repetitions, its direct practical aims, are proofs of reality and intensity of desire. We may expect that God will attend to our prayers in proportion to our earnestness in offering them. Reverent importunity is expected by God, and attains its end, as with Abraham (Gen. 18: 23-33), Jacob (Gen. 32: 26), Moses (Exod. 32: 7-14), and in our Lord's parable of the importunate widow (Luke 18: 1-7). 3. *Faith.* In his distress the prophet seeks his God, though it is against his God that the sin has been committed. Faith confesses that there is no help but in God. Faith persists in pleading with God, and relies on His mercy.

II. *Its Object.*—The object of this prayer is the pardon of sin. All our greatest evil comes from sin, and can only be removed when our sin is forgiven. Forgiveness brings in its train all the best blessings. 1. *The turning away of God's anger.* (Ver. 16). The worst effect of our sin is seen in the changed relations between our souls and God. God is angry with us. The essence of forgiveness is not the remission of penalties, but the restoration of friendly relations between God and man. It is personal reconciliation rather than legal acquittal. 2. *The awakening of God's sympathy.* The prophet prays, "Incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes." Forgiveness is not merely the

negative cessation of God's anger. It is the positive restoration of His sympathy. 3. *The practical help of God.* "Cause thy face to shine"; "hearken and do"; "defer not," are earnest practical petitions. After the spiritual reconciliation, we may naturally ask for help in the external calamities which our sins have brought upon us. Forgiveness is the preface to active help.

III. *Its Pleas.*—The prophet has no plea of merit. We can ask for nothing for our own righteousness. All our pleas must be found, as Daniel found his, in the character and actions of God. 1. *God's righteousness.* This is a plea, (1) because it implies his faithfulness to his promises of pardon to the penitent (Lev. 26: 40-44); and (2) because righteousness is more honored by the forgiveness which destroys sin than by the anger which only punishes it (Isa. 45: 21). 2. *God's honour.* Jerusalem is "God's holy mountain"; the city is "called by his name." God is dishonoured in the humiliation of His people, and He is glorified in their restoration (Numb. 14: 13-16). 3. *God's mercy.* (Ver. 18.) All prayer depends on the free grace of God. Prayer for pardon rests on that grace which pities misery and overlooks offences—the grace which we call mercy. This plea is expressed by the Christian phrase, "for Christ's sake," because Christ is both the Revelation of God's mercy and the Sacrifice by which it becomes attainable.—George Rawlinson.

HOSEA

Retribution.

"And it shall come to pass at that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."—Hosea 1: 5.

The word Jezreel means God's seed, or sowing. The tract of land called by this name was an extensive plain, computed by modern travellers to be about fifteen miles square, stretching south and southwest from Mount

Tabor and Nazareth; the hills of Nazareth and those of Samaria on the south, those of Tabor and Hermon on the west, and Carmel to the southwest. It was called by the Greeks Esdraelon: it had also a royal city, where the tidings of Saul's death in the battle of Gilboa was first announced. In this Ahab and Joram presided, and here Jehu slew both Jezebel and Joram. It was the scene of many battles: among them those between Deborah and Barak and Sisera, the commander of the Syrians; one between Ahab and the Syrians, and one between Saul and the Philistines, and another between Gideon and the Midianites. Indeed, it seems to have been a chosen place for battles, from Barak to Bonaparte. Warriors out of every nation which is under the heaven have pitched their tents upon the plains of Esdraelon, and have beheld the various banners of their nation wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon.

The text leads us to make a few remarks concerning God's retribution. Here the Eternal threatens to break the bow of Israel, in the valley of Jezreel. The language suggests that.

I. *God's Retribution Takes Away the Power of Its Victim.* The bow of Israel is to be broken. The language means the utter destruction of all their military power. Israel fought many battles, won many victories, and trusted in its "bow," military force, but now that very thing in which it trusted is to be destroyed.

It is ever thus, when retributive justice comes to deal out suffering to the sinner, it strips him entirely of his power; it breaks his bow and cuts his spear asunder. Thus he is left to the mercy of his enemies. What are the great enemies of the soul? Carnality, prejudice, selfishness, corrupt impulses, and habits. Retributive justice leaves the sinner at the mercy of these—breaks his bow, so that he cannot deliver himself. He

becomes their utter and their hopeless victim, and their "bow" is gone. The word of truth, the Spirit of God, and all the ministers of religion are taken from him, and he is left morally powerless. What "bow" have the victims of retribution in eternity by which to deliver themselves from their crushing tyrants? No bow at all—all redemptive instrumentalities are taken from them. Thank God we have a bow now in our hands, the Bible, the Spirit, the ministry, are all with us.

The words suggest that

II. *God's Retribution Despises the Prestige of Its Victim.* The bow is to be broken in the valley of Jezreel. Perhaps no spot on earth did Israel think of so much as Jezreel. It was the scene of their grandest military exploits, the scene, too, where Jehu their king had slain all the worshippers of Baal. It was to Israel what Marathon is to Greece, what Waterloo is to England. In this very scene the punishment shall come, the place of their glory shall be the place of their ruin and shame. Thus it is ever; when retribution comes it seems to despise the very things in which its victim gloried. A noble lineage, great wealth, patrimonial possessions, elevated positions, brilliant genius and distinguished abilities, these are the modern Jezreels of sinners. In these they boast. But what are these? God, when He comes to judgment, will strike them in those very places, He will break their bow in the valley of Jezreel.

The text suggests that

III. *God's Retribution Defies the Opposition of Its Victims.* Jezreel was well fortified. Israel had great confidence in the protection which it had. When the prophets foretold the ruin of their kingdom they would think it perhaps impossible, they would think of the victories won in Jezreel and the protection offered there. But retribution will take the

sinner in his strongest place, strike him down on the spot where he feels himself most fortified.

Notwithstanding Jezreel, the kingdom of Israel was broken; the ten tribes were scattered upon the hills as sheep that had no shepherd. What defence has the sinner? "Though hand join hand, iniquity shall not go unpunished."

Conclusion: Retribution must always follow sin. It may move slowly and silently, but its pace is steady, resolute, and increasing. Swifter and swifter it moves towards the victim. Sooner or later it will reach him, break his "bow," and overwhelm him in shame and confusion. "Be sure your sins will find you out."—David Thomas.

Religious Ignorance.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."—Hosea 4:6.

These words suggest three things in relation to religious ignorance.

I. *It Is Destructive.* "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, it is the mother of destruction.

First: What does it destroy? The growth of the soul in power, beauty, and fruitfulness. Secondly: How does it destroy? How can the lack of a thing destroy? How can nothing do mischief? The lack of heat and moisture will kill the vegetable kingdom: the lack of air will cause the extinction of all animal life. The soul without knowledge of God is like a plant without heat and moisture; an animal without the salubrious breeze.

II. *It Is Wilful.* "Because thou hast rejected knowledge." There is no culpability in a man being ignorant of some things. He may not have the means, the time, or the faculty for the particular attainment. Not so with the knowledge of God; it comes to him whether he will or not. It comes to him in the objects of nature; it comes to him in the necessary deductions of his reason; it comes to him in the intuitions of his moral nature. Besides, in some cases, as with the Israelites, it comes to man by special revelation. He rejects it. Ignorance of God is ever more a criminal ignorance. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

III. *It Is God-offending.* "I will also reject thee." It is not unnatural or unphilosophic to suppose that the condition of the man ignoring His existence must be to the last degree offensive to Him. Hence He deals out retribution. First: To themselves. "I will also reject thee," &c. Secondly: To their children. "I will also forget thy children." It is a Divine law springing from the constitution of society, that the iniquities of the fathers shall be visited on their children. Parents cannot do wrong without injuring their offspring.—The Homilist.

Naturalness of Retribution.

"Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee."—Hosea 6:8.

Dr. Henderson ends the chapter with this clause and begins the next chapter with the latter clause of this verse. Some regard the harvest here as used in a good sense, as pointing to the ingathering of the people of

God. But such a view is scarcely admissible. It evidently refers to punishment, and some suppose to that terrible punishment that fell on Judah as recorded in 2 Chron. 28:6-9. Divine punishment for sins is elsewhere spoken of as a harvest, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, and get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great."

"Another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

The imagery suggests:

I. *That Retribution Is Natural in Its Season.* There are the "appointed weeks of harvest." These weeks come round with an undeviating regularity, and they come because the Immutable One has decreed their advent. "Seed time and harvest shall not fail." Punishment comes to the sinner naturally, so far as the proper time is concerned. In this life the sinner has many harvests. Every transgression is a seed, and the seed sometimes grows rapidly and ripens fast. In truth, to some extent, man reaps to-day morally what he sowed yesterday; not the whole crop, it is true, for every sin is awfully prolific, but some portion. The law of memory, habit, causation, render this constant reaping inevitable. No man can do a wrong thing anywhere or any when, without its bringing to him sooner or later a harvest, even in this life. But in the after-world there is a full and complete harvest. All the sins committed are there ripened into crops of correspondent miseries. Yonder is the harvest; there is the reaping—reaping—reaping, and little less than reaping for ever. The wicked there reap "the fruit of their own doings." The imagery here suggests—

II. *That Retribution Is Natural in Its Results.* In harvest, the man

reaps the kind of seed he has sown, whatever it may be, barley or wheat. Also as a rule the amount; if he has sown sparingly he reaps sparingly, if with abundance he will reap abundantly. He gets what he wrought for. It is just so the retributive ministry of God, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The cheat shall be cheated, the oppressor shall be oppressed, the malicious shall be hated. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." The sinner in every pang of suffering will recognise the fruit of some sinful act of his. He will feel evermore that his misery has grown out of such a sin, and this out of that, and so on. Hence he will never be able to blame either God or His creation for his wretched destiny, he reaps "the fruit of his own doings." The imagery here suggests—

III. *The Retribution Is Natural in Its Approach.* As soon as the seed is sown and germination begins, it proceeds slowly and silently from day to day, week to week, and month to month, towards maturation, its harvest state. It is just so with sin; it proceeds naturally to work out its results, "Lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin; sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Punishment for sin does not require the positive and direct interposition of eternal justice; it comes—comes as the harvest comes—comes by the established laws of the moral universe. In truth, sin is more certain to ripen than the seed of the husbandman. Ungenial soil, foul weather, nipping frosts, scorching rays, destructive insects, may destroy the seed in the ground, so that it may never spring even to blade. But sin, unless uprooted by God's redemptive hand, cannot be destroyed, must grow, and ripen into a harvest of misery. "Be sure your sins will find you out."

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
Yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting,
With exactness grinds He all."

Longfellow.
—The Homilist.

The Inspiration of Scripture.

"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing."—Hosea 8:12.

This is an emphatic declaration of the Divine origin of Scripture. If it required utterance in Hosea's day, it equally demands our earnest consideration. The accessibility and cheapness of God's Word has tended to its neglect. Because it is less rare it appears to many less precious. In the reign of Edward I. a copy would cost £37, and as a laborer earned only three half-pence as his daily wage, it represented to him the product of fifteen years' work. How different now! Probably the abundance of religious and other literature has also done something to divert attention from the Bible. In fear of this Luther wished that his own books were burnt, "because," said he, "I fear lest they should hinder men from reading the Bible, that Book of books, in comparison whereof all the books in the world are but waste paper." If all were convinced that Scripture is a revelation from God, such neglect would be less frequent; and therefore it may be well to consider our belief in Divine inspiration, which the occult influence of materialistic philosophy has done much to weaken. May the Spirit of truth give us definiteness of conception, and may the Spirit of love give us generosity of tone!

I. That Inspiration Is Consonant

With Reason.—If it be admitted that God exists as the Creator of man, it is reasonable to expect that He would so far direct and control the human mind as to secure the ends of moral government. We do not believe that the laws of *physical* necessity are paramount. We refuse to throw the reins to the modern Phaéthon, who drives he knows not whither, and who cares not though the whole world of Christian thought and of moral life be burnt to ashes. The theory that the universe is a vast machine, governed only by the laws of material organisation, and that all its affairs are carried on by its own con-created powers, leads ultimately to the abasement of man and to the abolition of God; and from the abyss of despair to which Positivism leads us we recoil with horror. Our soul is something more than the concatenation of physical causes and effects; thought is not the mere product of movements in the particles of brain-matter; and love to each other and to God is higher than the ganglionic affection with which it may be associated. We believe that, though we are endued with freedom, God has not renounced all control over us; that side by side with our plans is a concurrent Providence evolving good; that the words are profoundly true, "*in him we live, and move, and have our being.*" It is to those with such a belief we are addressing ourselves, and say the inspiration of Scripture is what you might reasonably expect. If God control the physical world, it is not incongruous that He should present to human minds, and incline them to regard, and to communicate truths which relate to man's future destiny. If He make His sun to rise and flood the natural world with light, He will not leave the intellectual creation in darkness. In this thought lies the essential truth of inspiration. We shall not attempt to enumerate all the methods of Divine

revelation. God's ways are various in this, as in the natural world. He can hurl up an island by volcanic force, or He can build it by the multitudinous labors of coral insects. He can split a rock by the crash of the sea, or let a tiny stream trickle through it till it falls asunder. So in His revelations. Sometimes a voice has spoken, as on Sinai, and during the ministry of our Lord. Sometimes angels have appeared to speak to Abraham in his tent, or to the women at Christ's grave. The future has been revealed, now in dreams, as to Joseph; now in visions, as to Ezekiel. But we speak not of these revelations, but of inspiration, the direct internal suggestion given to men who wrote and spoke for God, giving to us in Scripture an authoritative rule of faith and practice.

II. That Inspiration Is Claimed for Itself by Scripture.—1. These writers, who were evidently modest, humble men, declare that they were imbued with supernatural knowledge; that they knew what they could not recognise by intellectual research, being wrought on directly by the Holy Ghost; e.g., 2 Sam. 23:2; Matt. 10:20; 1. Pet. 1:11, etc. 2. The truths they uttered justify such pretensions. Think fairly of any one of these men, consider his previous culture, his mental capacity, the condition of the world around him, mentally and morally, and see whether the dignity of Mosaic theology, the devout wisdom of the psalms, the pregnancy of prophecy, the nobility of moral tone throughout Scripture, could find source in the writers themselves. Above and behind them all a voice says, "I have written the great (or, 'multitudinous') things of my Law." 3. We may rest our belief in the inspiration of the Old Testament on declarations in the New. And these ultimately depend on the authority of Christ, the everlasting Word of God. Our Lord refers to several writers by

name, appealing to them as of Divine authority, and using their utterances in His great conflict in the wilderness. He habitually spoke of "the Law and the prophets" as giving a revelation of God's will, saying about these, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." His promises also to His disciples give authority to their utterances (John 14:17, 26; 16:13). (Note the effects produced in human society by the direct and indirect influence of Scripture.)

III. That Inspiration Is to Be Distinguished Both from 1. Genius and 2. From the Ordinary Work of Grace in the Heart of Man.—(1) Job 32:8 is a declaration that intellectual gifts are of God; and some speak of Shakespeare and of others as "inspired" men. In Job's sense they were inspired; but their thought is not parallel with the thought of Scripture. The Bible writers were not men of extraordinary ability; nothing in their history, or claims, or writings would indicate that they were; and sometimes they affirm that it was by giving up their own thinking for trust and prayer that they knew God's will. (2) Nor must the inspiration of the sacred writers be considered as identical with that being "filled with the Spirit," etc., of which we often read. It was even given sometimes independently of character, as to Balaam—though (as there is congruity in all God's works, so there was in this) usually it was associated with sanctified character. The two were separable, yet true men spoke of truth, pure men of purity, devout men of God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They were not unconscious instruments—mere automata. God employed their faculties, but did not supersede them. Each man retained his own individuality. It is well for us that it was so. We read the psalms and hear the voice of God; yet we hear also in them the sobs and songs

of man. We find Divine truth in Paul's Epistles; yet it is commended to us in Paul's human argument. Whether, however, it be in the thunder of Isaiah or in the trembling of Jeremiah, whether in the logic of Paul or the mysticism of John, we hear throughout all the declaration of God, "I have written," etc. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Conclusion:—Never account God's Word "a strange thing."—(1) We may do so by applying its precepts and promises to others and not to ourselves, as if they were foreign to us. (2) We may do so by allowing God's Word to lie beside us unread. Illustrate our duty by the story of the conversion of St. Augustine.—A. Rowland.

The Divided Heart.

"*Their heart is divided.*"—Hosea 10:2.

The preceding verse describes the sin of the people; this points us to its source. Like a vine, luxuriant in branch yet yielding no sound fruit, Israel deserved the curse which, during the ministry of our Lord, fell on the barren fig tree. The first verse may be compared advantageously with the description given of Israel in Ps. 80:8-15. The third clause in that verse does not continue to develop the figure, but makes a declaration which was literally true, viz., that in proportion as the fields were fruitful Israel multiplied idolatrous altars; and as the land was made good, so the images they worshipped were adorned with beauty. In other words, God's gifts were abused, and were dedicated, not to Him, but to false gods. The fear of Moses was justified. Now they enjoyed the goodly land they were forgetting the Lord their God. Point out the enervating effect of prosperity in such men as

Hezekiah, and in the decline and fall of great nations. The cause of Israel's sin was to be found in the fact that they were not whole-hearted in the worship of God; but while they kept up still the outward forms of the old religion, with "divided hearts" they mingled with it, or supported beside it, idolatrous practices. The question of Elijah, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" needed repetition in those days, and in these. Our Lord has distinctly declared that the frequent and sinful attempt of men to serve God and mammon is vain. Subject—*The divided heart.*

I. *Its Condition First Demands Consideration.* Whether in the physical or in the moral life of man, if we are in doubt about the state of our heart, we cannot be too careful in diagnosis. Diseases assail it which are so occult that they may not reveal themselves till they become fatal in result. Other diseases may have outward signs which any onlooker can recognise. Some heart-diseases are as insidious as they are perilous, betraying themselves neither by rash nor by pain. As the heart is the centre of our physical life, so here and elsewhere in Scripture it is alluded to as the centre of moral life; and in that aspect of it the words are true, "The heart is deceitful above all things." (Some such idea underlies the Hebrew word which Keil translates "smooth," or "flattering.") None but God and a man's own consciousness can declare whether this be true of any one, "his heart is divided." This is so, however, with any whose attitude towards God and His truth is as follows: 1. If their minds are convinced; 2. if their fears are aroused; 3. if their consciences are disturbed; while yet they yield no genuine homage to Him whose existence and claims they dare not deny.

II. *Its Evidences May Be Discovered* in such characteristics as these: 1. *Formality in worship.* "This peo-

ple draweth nigh to me with their mouth," etc. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The scribes and Pharisees were examples of this, exposed and rebuked by our Lord. 2. *Inconsistency in conduct.* This may be glaringly conspicuous, or it may be that the unholiness or unrighteousness is too *secretly practised* to be discovered by the world, or too *subtle* to be described and condemned by the Church, or too *generally practised* to be reprobated by society. Give examples of each in professional, or commercial, or social life. 3. *Fickleness in effort.* It is a sure sign of reality when we are "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"; when the world frowns as well as when it smiles; when the service is uncongenial as well as when it is delightful. He who readily takes up Christian work and then suddenly abandons it, may fairly ask himself whether his heart is not divided. The great Sower still sees the shallow soil of a sentimental character, where there is no depth and therefore no stability.

III. *Its Causes.*—1. *The love of sin.* We must lay aside "the sin that doth so easily beset us" if we would run the race and win the crown. He who will not give sin up for Christ's sake has the "divided heart." 2. *The fear of man.* The lad at school, or the man in business, is often disloyal

to conviction, and refuses to lay to heart the declaration of Christ. "He that is not with me is against me." 3. *The habit of procrastination.* The child says, "I will wait till I am old enough to take my own place in life"; the busy man or woman waits the leisure of old age; the vigorous delay till illness gives time for thought; and so life speeds away, and the words of Christ are unheeded, "My son, give me thine heart."

IV. *Its Effects.*—1. *Present unhappiness.* The undecided man knows too much to find rest in the world, but he loves too little to find rest in Christ. The consciousness of being wrong, the thought of a solemn duty left undone, the fear of discovery by Christian friends, the dread of death and its issue, with more or less frequency and intensity, bring him misery. 2. *Disastrous influence.* If he professes to be a Christian, he dishonours his Lord by his conduct in the world far more than one who avows himself to be an unbeliever. His Christian name injures the world, while his worldly character injures the Church. Examples: Judas, Demas, Ananias. 3. *Certain retribution.* "Some will awake . . . to everlasting contempt." "Let both grow together to the harvest," etc.

Conclusion:—*Encouragement to offer to our God the broken heart of true penitence, which He will not despise.*—A. Rowland.

AMOS

Hounds That Bay Before They Bite.

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."—Amos 3:7.

The prophet speaks here as if he were announcing axiomatic truth.

And it is nothing less. It might be argued from reason; it is historic fact; and it is a prominent Scripture doctrine.

I. *Judgment Never Comes Without Warning.* The Deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the plagues of Egypt, and the fall of Jerusalem, are cases in point. Sometimes judgment has taken people unawares (Matt.

24: 39), but this is because the warning has been disregarded (Gen. 19: 14; 6: 3). When there has been no warning the judgment has been provoked, not by a course of wickedness, but by a single flagrant transgression in connection with which warning was out of the question (Exod. 32: 27, 28; Num. 26: 10; Acts 12: 23). The warning of coming judgment is:

1. A disclosure of sin. To allow men to sin unheeded, and to find it satisfactory, would be to amnesty evil-doing, and practically to encourage it. To erect the gallows of impending judgment, on the other hand, brings into sight the fact of sin, and emphasises its demerit. Next to execution, the sentence of death is a revelation to the criminal of the enormity of his crime. It is a mental association of guilt with penalty, and so a measuring of its moral proportions. It is also:

2. A deterrent from sin. Judgment executed without warning loses half its value. The fear of the rod is a wholesome restraint on the folly of the child; greater often than the actual blow, because it operates through a longer period. God's moral government in its relation to sin aims at cure rather than mere punishment, at prevention rather than either. His blows fall only after his threats have failed to move (Prov. 1: 24, etc.; Jer. 6: 10, 11). Accordingly:

3. To denounce judgment sometimes makes it unnecessary to inflict it. A notable instance was that of Nineveh. If her repentance were more common, her escape would be more common also (Matt. 12: 41). God frights with the thunder of his threats, that He may not be compelled to smite with the lightning of his judgments. He makes a display of his resistless forces that the rebels may yield without going into action. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" that is the message of his open preparations to destroy.

II. This Warning Reaches Men Through the Prophets. On his way to the establishment of personal relations, God always treats with men through mediators. Covenants are made with representatives, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Christ. Justifying righteousness is negotiated typically through a priesthood, and antitypically through Jesus Christ. So saving knowledge is negotiated through the Holy Ghost, and by the instrumentality of inspired men.

1. This was the only feasible way. Not every man is fit to receive a revelation direct from God. To do so implies mental and moral conditions that are realised in but a small percentage of men. His revelation must reach many through a third party in any case. If the worse qualified must be spoken to through the better qualified, it is only carrying out the principle to speak to both through the best qualified of all, i.e. the prophet selected by God Himself. The Scripture is God's revelation, and adequate to man's need (2 Tim. 3: 15-17). The attempt to substitute for it an "inner light," or any other device, is to substitute our own nonentity for God's reality.

2. It tends to call faith into action. God wants his Word believed. And He wants it believed in a certain way and on certain grounds. To believe what we see is not the faith He wants (John 20: 29), nor properly faith at all. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Only such believing is intelligent or voluntary, and therefore possessed of moral qualities. If God revealed His will directly to each individual, bearing it in resistlessly on his consciousness, the moral discipline involved in faith would be lost to men.

3. It secures a record of God's message for universal use. A revelation given to men individually would be only for the individual and for the time then being. It would neither be

common property nor permanent property. And it is worth being made both. God's way is one in all ages. He is in the same mind about sin and deals with it on the same principles always. The record of what he has done is the prophecy of what in similar circumstances He will do. The prophet wrote so much of his message as had permanent interest, and the aggregate of such inspired deliverances is the Scripture, which is "a light in a dark place until the day dawn." It is not a revelation for an individual merely. Having served its turn with one, it is no less available for others in endless succession.

III. God's Prophets Are First of All His Servants. "His servants the prophets." The explanatory words, "his servants," widen greatly the sentiment of the clause.

1. To prophesy under Divine direction is itself an act of service. There is a wide sense in which all are God's servants who carry out any of His purposes. Thus Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar (Isa. 45:1; Jer. 25:9) are styled respectively the "anointed" and the "servant" of God,

because they were designated to and did a work for Him. This was a purely external relation, but it was real. All the prophets, even the wicked Balaam, were God's servants in this sense. They represented His interest. They went His errand. They carried His message. They laboured to accomplish His purpose. Their exercise of the prophetic office was service.

2. Official relations have their basis in personal relations. Shepherds and sheep alike come into the fold by the Door, Jesus Christ (John 10:1-14). All come in to the effect of their own salvation first, and being in fall into rank as gatherers-in of others. First faith, and then works, is thus the spiritual order; faith establishing personal relations with Christ, and work, among other things, trying to get others to do likewise. Hence Church officers are to be chosen out of the number of Church members. The conditions of spiritual work are spiritual gifts, and the condition of spiritual gifts is to be in the spiritual connection (John 14:6; Eph. 2:18).—J. Edgar Henry.

MICAH

Sin Wrappages.

"So they wrap it up."—Micah 7:3.

The author of this book, though a contemporary of Hezekiah, evidently sketches a period in Jewish history far more corrupt than his own day. The period he refers to in the context was a period when the good man had "perished out of the earth," and when "upright men existed not;" a period when all were "lying in wait for blood," and every man was "against his brother;" a period when men did evil with "both hands earnestly"; and when the authorities, the "prince and the judge," sold justice for bribes.

Yet, though the people and the authorities of this period were so corrupt, they had not entirely lost all shame of the abominations, for the prophet says, "they wrap it up." All were busy in artful endeavours to conceal from others the wickedness of their conduct. Now the endeavour of these people to wrap up their sin in concealment is worthy our attention for several reasons, because it is general, wicked, and unwise.

I. *Because It Is General.* Sin seems to have in it an instinct of self-concealment; it cannot bear the light. Like the noxious reptiles of the earth, it shrinks from observation. Hence, no sooner does a man commit a

sin than he seeks to "wrap it up."

First: He seeks to "wrap it up" from society. The sight of men wrapping up their sin is as common as it is sad. In all grades of society, in all departments of action, men are active in wrapping up their sin. The dishonest tradesman wraps up the thousand sins of his daily avaricious life, in the bland smile, the cringing bow, and the false statement which he makes to his customers. Every parcel he delivers to the purchaser is wrapt up in falsehood. In the professions, you have the same wrapping. The lawyer, the physician, the priest, each has his sins, and each has his method of wrapping them up. Candidates for public offices will "wrap up" the sinful wishes that prompt them to seek the post, by many an avowal of patriotism and benevolence, as false as they are fair. So, through the social realm, the thief wraps up his thefts, the liar his lies, the debauchee his infamies, the impostor his falsehood, the murderer his murders,—all as best they can. This general "wrapping up" of our sins from the eyes of our fellow-men shows the essential hideousness of sin. The conscience of universal man feels that it is an execrable thing, therefore he seeks to conceal it. In truth, were sinful man to show his real wicked heart to its fellow, the confidence of a corrupt community would be utterly destroyed. Such public confidence and social order as prevail in a world of corrupt souls are founded on deception.

Secondly: He seeks to "wrap it up" from his own conscience. This the sinner does by specious excuses which he offers to himself for his wickedness. Sometimes he will seek to "wrap" his sin in the garb of custom, so as to hide its enormity from his conscience, and he hopes that the custom of his trade or his profession will justify his doings. Sometimes

he will "wrap" his sin in the infirmities of men who have been regarded as good, and he will seek to satisfy conscience by reference to the imperfections of men, whom the world, the Church, and even the Bible itself, canonise as saints. Sometimes he will endeavour to "wrap up" his sin of religious neglect, by promises of improvement in a future time, as Felix did of old. Thus, in various ways, men endeavour to conceal by various wrappings the enormity of sin from their own consciences.

The endeavour of this people to wrap up their sin is important to notice:

II. *Because It Is Wicked.* It is adding sin to sin; the concealment of a sin is a double sin. By wrapping a sin up, however strong may be your motives for doing so, you enhance the guilt, and make the matter worse. Instead of destroying, you strengthen and multiply sin, by endeavouring to conceal it. The serpent hatches its brood under the cover.

First: Concealing sin is a sin against our constitution. We are organised to be open and revealing, we have organs made to reveal fully and faithfully what is in us, and our natural instincts urge us to this revelation. We are made to appear what we are, not what we are not. When we appear to others what we are not, we do violence to the nature that God has given us. If we have sinned, let us crawl as the hideous serpent, not assume the gait of an angel.

Secondly: Concealing sin is a sin against society. We have no right to appear to others what we are not. The hypocrite is of all forgers the most wicked and dangerous. It is true, as we have intimated, that were all men in a corrupt generation fully to unfold to each other their depravity, there would be an end to the kind of social order that now prevails. But better have social anarchy with honesty, than social peace built on

falsehood. Better that the child who has committed a crime against his father, should, by confessing it, have the frowning brow and indignant word of his offended sire, than live under an approving smile, which his crime had forfeited; better for both parties.

Thirdly: Concealing sin is a sin against God. It is an insult to His omniscience. His eye is everywhere. No wrappage can conceal from Him. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good." "He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." The man, therefore, who endeavours to wrap up his sins in concealment, not only ignores, but insults the omniscience of the Eternal. The endeavour of these people to wrap up their sins is important to notice:

III. Because It Is Unwise.

First: The endeavour must inevitably prove fruitless. Even here, circumstances often occur in a man's history to bring out to the full view of his contemporaries his hidden sins. The wrappage gets rent, and the unswathed monster leaps into the light, and we shudder. "Murder will out"; and not only murder. Yes, and to a man's own conscience here, often by the force of moral conviction, all the monsters are unwrapt. The eye of the awakened conscience sends its fiery glance through all, and "sin appears exceedingly sinful." But in the future there will be a full and complete unfoldment. Fold after fold, however intricately and numerously winded round the evil thing, will be unloosed and thrown away in the

flames of the last day. "God will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing." "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." "In that day, the judge will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

Secondly: The endeavour is eternally inimical to happiness. The child who commits a crime against his parents will move in wretched gloom in the happy circle of love, so long as he seeks to wrap up his offence. Let him confess it in tears, and the dark cloud will break, and the sun will shine again into this heart. Thus David felt, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh, shall have mercy."

Thirdly: The endeavour, if persisted in, will involve in unutterable ruin. Though you should succeed in so wrapping up your sins from your fellow-men that you be regarded here as a model citizen and a distinguished saint, no sooner will you pass into eternity than the imposture will blaze out in the unquenchable fires of perdition.

Brother, learn from this, that all sinners are almost necessarily hypocrites. Goodness in man begins in tearing off the wrappings in which sin is concealed, and penitentially confessing the wickedness before God. When sin is thus renounced, and Christian virtue cultivated, man is able to live an unhypocritic life before his fellow-men. Until that, all is falsehood, and alas the social world is fraught with falsehood. "A lie," says a great modern writer, "should be trampled on and extinguished wherever found. I am for fumigating the atmosphere when I suspect that falsehood, like pestilence, breathes around me."—David Thomas.

The Grace of God to Sinners.

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—Micah 7: 18-19.

I. The Sinner's Astonishment.—What is the first thing that brings out this astonishment in the Prophet's heart, and makes it heard in this eloquent way from his lips? His wonder is he has to do with a God who forgives iniquity like his. It is that that gives an everlasting freshness to the pulpit. It is when a man has an everlasting sense of God's unspeakable grace to his own soul that his message comes straight from his heart and comes hot to the heart of his people. Let our pulpits be filled with men overwhelmed with a sense of God's grace to their own souls, and you will not need to advertise singular subjects; you will fill your churches to the doors when the minister's own heart is filled as Micah's was with downright amazement at God's longsuffering and patience with the preaching Prophet himself. He begins with the very A B C of the Gospel, the offer of pardon for sin.

The first thing that amazes him even to seventy and eighty years of age is that God is still forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and it is that that holds together his congregation in Jerusalem, that makes his own heart burn with freshness and power because of the memory and present experience of God's unspeakable salvation and adorable patience to himself a sinner.

And what makes good preaching makes good hearing. But you must go back into the past and bring a broken heart out of it again to receive afresh the ever new and ever blessed Gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

II. Remnants.—He passeth by for His own reasons the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage; He retaineth not His anger for ever for He delighteth in mercy. He retaineth it not. It does not say He delights in anger; He delights in mercy; therefore if we need a great mercy let us comfort our hearts with this, that He delights in the thing we need. Mercy and misery are made for one another. There would be no mercy in God if there was no misery in man. God is love, and His love becomes mercy in presence of my misery. He delighteth in mercy, and will cast all your sins in the depths of the sea—that mystical, spiritual, wonderful sea, the sea of the grace of God.—Alexander Whyte.

MALACHI**Threefold Aspect of True Saint-hood.**

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another."—Malachi 3: 16.

I. The Life of the Good, as It Is Manifested upon Earth.—“Then they

that feared the Lord.” It is—1. Loyal. There is profound reverence; a filial, not a slavish fear. Not fearing the anger of God, but fearing to offend Him; not forsaking sin because it brings punishment, but because God hates it. Such fear of God will engender love, inspire faith, produce holiness, secure obedience. 2. It is

social. "Spake often one to another." True piety is a cheerful, sympathetic thing; it does not destroy our social instincts, but intensifies and ennobles them. The natural tendency of the fear of the Lord in the heart is to link men together in the bonds of brotherhood, to hush the discord of society, and to lead us to bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. These believers spake often one to another—not of each other's failings—not for scandal or strife, but about the work of the Lord, and to each other's edification. 3. It was also secret. There was the inner as well as outer, the subjective as well as the objective life; they "thought upon his name." They were not all talk; they were not hypocrites—"talkatives";—they had heart religion. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he; and as he thinks, he loves and lives. Our life must be of this sort to please God, for He looketh at the heart. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together; and our affections must be fixed on things above.

II. *The Life of the Good, as It Is Recognised in Heaven.*—"And the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him." 1. It is known in

heaven. God recognises those who fear Him, though they may be little and unknown, they are loved and prized by God. The Lord is represented as bending from His throne, and listening to the sounds that come from the earth; and as He hearkens, He hears and recognises the voice of His people, who hold sweet communion with each other, and hallowed communion with Himself; as by unseen electric wires, with inconceivable swiftness, holy thoughts and words flash to heaven, and enter the ear of the Most High. Our conversation is in heaven. 2. It is recorded there. God blots out the sins of His people from His book, but He keeps a book of remembrance for the virtue of His saints. We may forget our work of faith and labour of love, but God never forgets.

III. *The Life of the Good, as It Will Be Consummated in the Last Great Day.*—This shows—1. It will be crowned with the highest possible honour. We shall be owned as friends, and children, and companions of God for ever. 2. It will be crowned with the highest possible glory. "Jewels" are among a monarch's brightest and costliest things; and God speaks of His believing servants as His "jewels."—F. W. Brown.

PART II: NEW TESTAMENT

Part II: New Testament

MATTHEW

The Name "Jesus."

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matthew 1:21.

“Jesus” was the personal name of our Lord, the Greek equivalent of the old Jewish name “Joshua,” and not unknown in Hebrew families. Therefore to His contemporaries it would not have the unique associations that it has for us. It would be merely the designation of an individual. But everything that Christ touches is elevated to a new value by His contact with it. Now that He has been named “Jesus,” that name is to us precious “as ointment poured forth.”

I. *The Main Mission of Christ Is to Save.*—His work may be regarded in many lights. He is the great Teacher. His kingly throne is set up, and He has come to rule over us. In daily life He is the “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” But before all He is the Saviour. This comes first, as the personal name “Jesus” comes before the official title “Christ.” It is of His very nature to save. He cannot teach or rule or cheer us effectually until He has saved us. Now, this is the unique glory of Christ. Nature destroys the weak and cherishes the strong. Christ has pity on failure; He comes to rescue from ruin. Wherever there is distress or danger there He finds His peculiar sphere of activity.

II. *The Great Evil from Which Christ Saves Is Sin.*—Other evils are also removed. But they are of but a secondary character, and are not worthy to be named in comparison with this dark and direful curse of mankind. When once sin is mastered and cast out, it will be an easy work to expel the secondary troubles of life. For the most part they are the consequences of this monstrous evil, and will depart with it. At all events, we shall be stronger to bear those that remain when the heart-paralysis of moral evil is cured. The last thing that many people want from Christ is to be saved from their sin. They would be glad to be delivered from its pains and penalties, but the thing itself they love and have no wish to abandon. For them there is no salvation. Christ aims at the sin first of all. He treats it as man’s deadly foe. For those who feel its weight, here is the very essence of the Gospel—What we cannot do for ourselves by resolution and effort He can do for us, if we will open our hearts and let Him in. Take this literally. He can save us from our own sins—our defects of character, evil habits, bad temper, vices.

III. *This Salvation Is for Christ’s People.*—Here is a limitation. It must not be forgotten that the Gospel of St. Matthew was written for Jews. Christ’s first mission was to “save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Yet no one who reads the New Testa-

ment throughout can doubt that the limitation is not final. The Jew was only to have the first offer of salvation. He was to be invited in to the feast that he might afterwards go out and introduce others. Now the message is that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him" (Heb. 7: 25). Yet the specification of "His people" has still an important meaning. Christ is not only the Saviour at the entrance of the Christian life, but throughout its course. The people of God are not perfect; daily they commit new sins, and Christ is their daily Saviour. Not only at the moment of regeneration, but through the long and often sadly stained Christian life, we need Christ to save from sins that still beset us.—W. F. Adeney.

The Fruit of Repentance.

"Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."—Matthew 3:8.

John sees a great danger. His preaching is immensely popular. Even the insincere are drawn under the spell of his oratory, and his rousing eloquence is enjoyed on its own account by many who refuse to obey its ideas. He is the lion of the season, and society runs after him as after the latest fashion. To one in dead earnest, as John was, this must have been perfectly abhorrent. Then no doubt there were sentimental, superficial hearers who were really impressed by his preaching for the time, but on whom the effect of it was merely emotional. Such people needed to see that they must have a repentance deeper than the tears of a day.

I. *Repentance Must Be in the Will as Well as in the Emotions.*—It is easy to feel sorry for the wrong one has done; yet this feeling may not carry with it any determination not to repeat the wrong. A wave of emo-

tion may sweep over the soul, and during its passage all love of sin may be buried, and only the most becoming ideas appear on the surface. But they will be but froth and foam melting into nothing, and they will vanish with the retreating wave, leaving the hard rock beneath quite unmoved. There is no real repentance until the will is touched, until the penitent resolves to abandon his sin and to seek a better life. He may well see that he cannot do this himself; his sin is too strong for him, and the better life is above his reach. Repentance is not regeneration, but it is a sincere desire for a new life, an honest determination to seek it.

II. *True Repentance Will Reveal Itself in Conduct.*—It has its fruits. No one can be really turning round from sin and setting his face towards the light without some results appearing in his behaviour. He will not immediately step onto the pedestal of the saint. He will be still down in the darkness, feeble, depressed, guilty, and conscious of guilt. But every action will show that he is trying to reach after better things, even though they may be still far beyond his grasp. Lorenzo di Medici on his death-bed sends for Savonarola, and, in terror of the torments of hell, begs to be assured of the Divine forgiveness. The stern reformer bids the dying man return their possessions to those whom he has robbed, and set his imprisoned enemies free, and he consents. Then Savonarola makes a third demand, that the tyrant will restore their liberties to the Florentines. This is too much for him; he turns away in silent refusal and dies unrepentant—and therefore unshaven.

III. *It Is the Duty of the Penitent to Cultivate Fruits of Repentance.*—People sometimes distress themselves with the fear that they have not repented sufficiently to receive the pardon of God. But they make a mistake if they suppose that the excit-

ing of deeper feelings of compunction or the shedding of more tears is what God requires. Let them leave their emotions to take care of themselves, and set their attention on their conduct. This does require thought and effort. Yet the very fact that repentance must bear fruit shows that it is more than a work of man's production. Therefore it is necessary to seek the "grace" of repentance, to pray for the Spirit of God to make the true fruits appear. Lastly, let it be remembered when they do appear they are not all we need; they are only the signs of a right state of mind for receiving forgiveness.—W. F. Adeney.

Hoarding.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."—Matthew 6:19.

The all-absorbing desire of humanity is happiness. A depraved heart naturally seeks this in the world. Money, which "answereth all things," is the exponent of the world's good. Hence the feverish desire to accumulate money. Wealth comes to be loved and laid up because it is loved. This hoarding is sin.

I. *Making Proper Provision for the Future* is not here condemned. 1. God commands this prudence in His system of nature. (1) He has so ordered the seasons that one harvest yields enough to serve us until the next. The elements that ripen fruits in the soil tend to rot those gathered the preceding year. God cannot be displeased at our following His providence. (2) He impresses His providence upon the instincts of animals. Thus the bee stores in summer the honey that will serve it for the winter. The morals of nature are for our profit. 2. He commands it in the economy of grace. (1) The term of our natural life is given as a proba-

tion to be utilised for eternity. It is the seedtime which, if neglected, will leave us to reap a harvest of thorns and thistles. (2) The God of grace is also the God of providence. The principles of grace, therefore, have their lessons of providence for us. 3. He commends it in the lessons of providence. (1) History and experience teach us that not only in Egypt in the days of Joseph, but in all lands and in all ages, seasons of plenty are followed by seasons of scarcity. Hence the proverbial "rainy day." (2) We see the sufferings of improvidence. The artisan, in times of plenty thrifty, will not need in duller times to sing through the streets for charity. While the asylum of the workhouse is no disgrace to the unfortunate, it is a disgrace to the improvident. The injunction of the text is that we are not so to lay up treasures upon the earth as to deprive us of the more precious and enduring treasure in heaven.

II. *Hoarding Is Deprecated as Sinful and Pernicious*.—1. The hopes of riches are delusive. (1) They do not give immunity from anxiety. The moth, the rust, and the thief, like spectres, haunt the dreams of the wealth-lover. He finds more anxiety in preserving than he found in acquiring his treasure. (2) They do not raise us above the fear of want. Millionaires have been so haunted with this fear that to relieve them their friends procured for them parish relief, and have set them to work for wages on their own estates. (3) Gold cannot purchase health. (4) It cannot remove the terrors of a guilty conscience. 2. The love of riches is degrading. (1) The heart will be with its treasure. Its treasure, therefore, should be worthy of it. If heaven be the treasure, then the heart will be ennobled; for the God of purity is its glory. No moth, no rust, no thief, can deprive us of that treasure. (2) If the hoard be the treas-

ure of the heart, degradation is inevitable. The heart cannot be separated from its treasure. Upon this principle it is that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," etc. (3) It hardens the heart. Monopoly is selfishness. The heart of the miser is hardened by a systematic resistance to the promptings of benevolence. We may challenge the world to produce a tender-hearted miser (1 John 3:7). 3. Riches invest death with additional terrors. (1) For they have to be relinquished. Garrick conducted Johnson over his mansion, and, directing his attention to valuable pictures and other articles of treasure, expected to be praised for his taste; but the moralist said, "Ah, David, these are the things that make death terrible!" (2) The guilty steward is also haunted by the terror of the account he will have to render to his judge (Jas. 5:1-4). The wail, not of the poor only, but of lost souls who might have been saved had the Lord's money been invested in Christian enterprise, will pierce and alarm his conscience when death stares him in the face. 4. Hoarded treasure is often a pernicious inheritance. (1) How often is such an inheritance dissipated in prodigality! Young men who hope to inherit fortune are seldom disposed to grapple with the difficulties of gaining a profession. Habits of indolence lead to dissipation. (2) Sometimes the hoard inherited becomes the nucleus of a greater. To become a millionaire, or something like it, the inheritor will sell his very soul for gain. (3) How different is the history of the youth who has to rely upon his education and the blessing of God, and who helps the cause of God and humanity with the fruits of his industry! His heart is light. He dies in faith.

III. How Does the Good Steward Manage His Estate?—1. He claims no absolute right of acquisition. (1)

He owns the Source of his prosperity (Deut. 8:17, 18). (2) He confesses that God could instantly reverse the tide of his success. (3) He never says, "I can do what I like with my own." 2. He accepts his maintenance from God. (1) He is entitled to his food, raiment, and habitation, for himself and those depending upon him. (2) He is, moreover, entitled to a provision against sickness and old age. (3) He is authorised in giving his family an education and a start in life. (4) God will Himself add to all this the spiritual rewards of well-doing. 3. With the rest his problem is to secure the maximum of good. (1) To this end he will study the needs of men. This may be troublesome; but it is the business of the steward. God will not approve a slovenly disbursement of His money. (2) He will also study the best means of meeting the needs of men. The merits and claims of the great evangelical and philanthropical societies will have due consideration. (3) He will cultivate the spirit of Christ, so that he may relieve the needs of men without wounding their sensibilities or injuring their self-respect. (4) In all things he will seek direction from God in prayer.—J. A. Macdonald.

Hem of Christ's Garment.

"And, behold, a woman came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment."—Matthew 9:20.

The fact upon which the writers focus our thought is that the woman touched only the hem of His garment.

I. *What Is the Hem of Christ's garment?* Where is the hem of Christ's garment to-day? The hem this woman touched was one of the four tassels of blue which hung from the fringe of His coat. The robe with its fringe no longer passes down

our streets. But the hem of Christ's garment can still be touched. For what was this hem, and what is this hem, but that through which His virtue passed out of Him? All the world of things seen, all that is beautiful and uplifting and inspiring, all holy influences and wise thoughts and gracious words, are but the channels through which the virtue of Jesus passes to the healing of the issues of body and mind and spirit.

II. *Some of the Ways in Which Christ's Virtue Passes Out of Him.*—

1. Think of the hem of Christ's garment in nature. Nature is the visible garment of God, wrought, as Goethe said, by God's fingers in time's roaring loom.

2. Think of the hem of Christ's garment in art. By art I include all that is pure and lovely and noble in literature, in architecture, in music, in sculpture, and painting, and in all the works of men done under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. There are some who never see a lovely hill-side but they think of it as a place to parcel out in profitable allotments. These are the soldiers who cast lots for Christ's garment at the foot of the cross. These are becoming fewer every day. Yet there are still many who do not realise that art is also the hem of Christ's garment.

3. Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the Word. This is the tassel of blue which most have touched. The Word of God is the closest garment of His thought. It is significant that Christ is called the Word, simply because God in Christ passed out to reveal Himself, and to work his miracles, in and by a word.

4. Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the ministries of the Church. Newman has a sermon with the arresting title, "The Church a home for the lonely," in which he shows, in his own deep and simple and lucid way, how solitary, and outcast, and disappointed men find in the

service and fellowship of the Church the help and solace they need. There are issues often shameful, sometimes secret, sometimes exhausting, which Christ heals through the ministries of the Church. He heals them as He healed the woman, secretly and with a touch.

(5) Think of the hem of Christ's garment in the Sacrament of the Supper. Nothing else brings us so near Christ, and through nothing else does His virtue pass so immediately as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.—W. M. Clow.

Two Devils.

"He casteth out devils through the prince of devils."—Matthew 9:34.

We have just seen two blind men in agreement. We are now introduced to two devils in diversity. Here is the dumb devil. Here also is the devil muttering blasphemy.

I. *Here Is a Comparison of Two Sad Cases.*—1. The dumb demoniac.

(1) Here is a man bodily in the hands of a demon. So completely is he in the power of the evil spirit that his self-control is lost. What an emblem of the helplessness of those who are morally "carried captive by the devil at his will!" (2) He is "dumb." (a) He has no voice for prayer. (b) He has no voice for praise. (c) He has no voice for testimony. (3) God had not opened his mouth. No other power was competent.

2. The blaspheming Pharisee. (1) He had a voice to impeach the Holy One as a sinner. (a) Because He did the best works on the best of days. (b) Because He condescended to eat with publicans and sinners. (c) Because He did not fast in deference to rabbinical tradition. (d) Because He proved that He has power on earth to forgive sins. (2) In all this the devil was concealed.

For wherein does this voice essentially differ from that of the Gadarene demoniacs who cried, "What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God?" (ch. 8:29). Malignity is no less devilish because masked as piety. (3) The blasphemy of the Pharisee advanced to refer the miracles of Christ to diabolical agency. (a) The miracles as facts could not be disputed. It is too late in the day for the modern sceptic to dispute them. (b) The Pharisee had no other way in which to evade their evidence but to trace them to the worst possible authorship. (c) The malignity of Beelzebub is in the libel. And how much better is the sceptic who traces the miracles of Christ to natural causes? Is not the influence of Satan still hidden under what are called natural disorders?

II. The More Subtle Proves the Sadder.—1. The dumb devil is driven out. (1) The demoniac is brought to Jesus. He cannot come of himself. (2) He is brought in the arms of compassionate faith. The devil cannot resist the power of faith, though exercised by third parties. Let not the righteous relax the effectual fervent prayer. (3) In response to prayer the demon is expelled. Behold, the dumb has found his voice. Saul of Tarsus in conversion found his voice in prayer (Acts 9:11). Praise is the companion of prayer (Ps. 51:15). 2. The multitudes marvel. (1) No wonder they should, for here were four stupendous miracles wrought in one afternoon. (a) The healing of the profluous woman. (b) The restoring of Jairus's daughter to life. (c) The imparting of vision to two blind men. (d) And now the expulsion of the dumb devil from the demoniac. (e) To these he immediately added many more (ver. 35). (2) They express their admiration in the exclamation, "It was never so seen in Israel." And if not in Israel, where, then? For the He-

brews, themselves a miraculous people, were of all peoples the most favoured by the working of miracles amongst them. 3. The blaspheming devil holds his own. (1) The Pharisees never came to Christ. They were wilfully, therefore hopelessly, wicked. (2) By their wickedness they prevented the astonished multitude from accepting their Messiah. (3) The bad influence of the Pharisees is seen in the apostasy of the Hebrew nation to this day.—J. A. Macdonald.

What to Fear.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—Matthew 10:28.

Fear has a place in the economy of life, but the common mistake is to put it in the wrong place. We have dangers, but not where we commonly look for them. There is a needless fear which should be discouraged, and there is a necessary fear which has to be cultivated.

I. The Discouragement of Needless Fear.—1. This is the fear of man. The apostles were sent out as sheep among wolves. The gathering opposition of the authorities of Israel against their Master was likely to turn against them also if they showed themselves zealous in advocating his cause. The fear of the disciples under these circumstances would be a type of worldly fear. With us this is not the dread of martyrdom; it is a horror of ridicule, a terror of being despised by fashion. 2. Why it is stimulated. There was real danger to the apostles. Men can kill the body, and Christ does not deny this obvious fact. He does not offer His disciples a smooth course; on the contrary, He distinctly affirms that He has come to send a sword (ver. 34). 3. How it is

discouraged. Various considerations prove this to be a needless and even an unworthy fear. (1) The example of Christ. He is ill used. Why should the disciples complain if they receive the same treatment as their Master (vers. 24, 25)? (2) The future revelation. Hidden things will be made manifest. Then the true life which seems to end in darkness will be brought to light and fully vindicated. It is hard to die under false opprobrium; but this is not the end. There will be a final declaration and justification of the wronged (vers. 26, 27). (3) The limit of man's power. He can kill the body, but he cannot touch the soul. Epictetus's master cannot destroy his slave's liberty of soul. The Christian's persecutor may rob him of his brief bodily life, but not of his eternal spiritual life. (4) The merciful care of God, who sees every sparrow that falls and counts the very hairs of our head, watching the least-valued creatures, observing the least minutiae of His children's condition (vers. 29, 30). This we must take on faith; for the sparrow falls in spite of God's watchfulness. But Christ, who knows God, assures us that it is so; and if God is infinite it must be so. (5) The guilt of cowardice. Dare we shrink from confessing Christ for fear of man? Such conduct will merit His rejection of us (vers. 32, 33).

II. The Cultivation of Legitimate Fear.—1. The object of this fear. This is the awful destroyer of souls—he who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. There is a childish fear of the devil that haunts the minds of superstitious people—a terror that sat like a nightmare on the people of the Middle Ages. Such a fear is but physical. But that which Christ would inculcate is moral—the dread of sin. Our great enemy is the spirit of evil, and he attacks us whenever we are tempted. Christ wants us to have a

horror of doing wrong. 2. The grounds of this fear. (1) Soul-destruction. Man can but kill the body; sin kills the soul. This is the peculiar effect of wickedness. If it only brought pain, the infliction might be a merciful chastisement, leading us to repentance. But it does far worse; it kills the soul. The wages of sin is death; the broad road leads to destruction; evil conduct paralyses our better self, saps our higher energy, robs us of our faculties, blinds, crushes, deadens the life within. (2) Future ruin. The power of man only appertains to earth; the results of sin are seen after death. Therefore we do well to be on our guard, not with abject terror, but seeking security in Christ.—W. F. Adeney.

A Prophet's Doubt.

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"—Matthew 11:3.

What is most remarkable about this question is that it was put by John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. Let us look at the doubt in relation to the prophet who felt it.

I. *The Subject of the Doubt*—This was most fundamental. Was Jesus the Christ or not? No doubt can be more serious than this. There are many questions which cannot be answered, and people are not to be called sceptics because they do not see all truth. It is impossible to think on the great problems of existence without the most perplexing surmises, and yet while all these unsettled ideas may pass through the mind, it is still possible for faith to be fixed on a rock with a deep conviction of God and a calm trust in Christ. But we must be clear and decided on these two points—not theoretically, but practically. We cannot understand the Trinity, and we may be quite un-

able to comprehend the Incarnation. Still, it is of vital importance to know whether indeed Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, whether we can come to God through Him and trust Him as our eternal Redeemer.

II. The Reception of the Doubt.—A doubt as to the end of his work is in the mind of the Baptist. Had he made a mistake in pointing to Christ? Consider this man who entertains such a thought. 1. A prophet. Inspiration does not prevent personal weakness. Advanced knowledge will not secure us against the invasions of doubt. An apostle was a doubter (John 20: 25). 2. A good man. John the Baptist was no deceiver of the people. His heart was right with God. Yet he doubted. Doubt is not sinful in itself. 3. A privileged man. John had known Christ, had baptised Him. Yet he doubted. It is not enough to know Christ after the flesh. 4. A religious leader. It is possible for a great religious teacher to be in error. Does the pope ever have a doubt? Certainly it is foolish for preachers to assume infallibility. Sympathy with doubters by confession of difficulties would be a tie of union between teacher and learner. Yet the pulpit is not a place in which to air one's doubts. If the teacher is in serious uncertainty as to his message, is he not a blind leader of the blind?

III. The Causes of the Doubt.—How dared the black thought venture to roost in the mind of the great prophet? 1. In disappointment. Jesus had not developed into the Messiah John had expected. The promising career of the Nazarene seemed to be passing into a simple ministry of preaching and healing. But John had a mistaken idea of the Messiahship. Sometimes doubts arise from the disappointment of erroneous religious notions. 2. In adversity. John lay in prison—he who all

his life had lived in the wilderness! We need not be astonished that he was depressed. 3. Without full grounds of assurance. John never had been exactly a Christian. There is much doubt infecting the border-land of Christian faith.

IV. The Treatment of the Doubt.—1. Confession. John did not deny it; he did not hide it in shame; on the contrary, he clearly expressed it. We have half conquered our doubts when we have distinctly stated them. 2. Inquiry. John did not rest satisfied with doubt. He sought a solution of his difficulty. 3. Resorting to Christ. John sent to Christ. We can best learn about Christ by going straight to Christ. It is wise to bring our doubts to Him. He meets doubt by showing His great works. To-day the answer to doubt is the work of Christ in the world.—W. F. Adeney.

The Unpardonable Sin.

"Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come."—Matthew 12: 32 (R. V.).

I. To take these words as an authoritative declaration of the unending duration of evil, and the ceaseless retributive punishment of the evildoer, is to interpose an immeasurable barrier between God and the humanity for the existence of which He is solely responsible; and hopelessly to confuse the standard of moral rectitude, by implying the inability of God to act upon the command He has enforced on men to forgive one another, even until seventy times seven.

It is instructive in this context to note the quotations in Bingham's "Antiquities" from the early Fathers of the Christian Church in connection with what is called the "unpardonable sin." "The notion," he says

"that the ancients had of the sin against the Holy Ghost was not that it was absolutely unpardonable, but that men were to be punished for it both in this world and the next, unless they repented of it."

II. Consider, then, what is the cogency and extent of this dread declaration which remains in the page of Holy Scripture as a warning to the hardened and impenitent. The eternal truth is that wilful, continuous opposition to an elemental principle is unforgiveable, in the sense of the removal of the inevitable consequences of the opposition, either in this world or in the spiritual world. If man, in the exercise of what he calls his freedom, blasphemeth an elemental law of the natural world, he commits the unpardonable sin against nature.

Now, in the passage of Scripture before us, this declaration is made with regard to the ultimate factors of being both in the natural world and in the spiritual world. But, it may be asked, can rebellion against elemental law in the natural world be designated rebellion against the Holy Spirit? The answer to the question is found in a reverent consideration of the nature, place, power and revealed functions of that particular operation of the Eternal which is named in the Nicene Creed, "the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-giver." For the Holy Spirit is the universal life, the "I am" in whatever is, the essential vitality creating all, pervading all, sustaining all.

III. When we, with the awakened God-germ striving within us, with the guarantee of our baptism that we are in very deed the Lord's, persistently, consciously resist, ignore, blaspheme that "gentle voice, soft as the breath of even"—when we deliberately "become empty of the Spirit that we may be full of self, the question of forgiveness does not enter into it, for forgiveness does not remake character.

Man's safety, man's happiness, man's illumination, the formation of man's character—all depend on his being filled with the Spirit, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control."—Basil Wilberforce.

The Sin Against the Holy Ghost.

"Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

—Matthew 12: 32.

The sensitiveness of this critical age is very wonderful. Considering the immense number of insignificant persons who are favoured with paragraphs and biographies in papers, one might imagine that the great majority would regard with composure what was written about them. This patience might at least be looked for from those whose main occupation it is to abuse their fellow-creatures. As a matter of fact, this equanimity is very rare, even among the greatest. Mr. Gladstone, in his curious chapter of autobiography, tells us that a silly electioneering placard once almost unmanned him. "It freezes the blood in moments of retirement and reflection for a man to think that he can have presented a picture so hideous to the view of a fellow-creature." More authors than would easily be believed have the criticisms of their books "broken" to them. George Eliot and Dickens could not read theirs at all. There is something very ignoble about this. At all events, the person who cannot endure criticism should refrain from criticising.

I. In singular contrast with this is the majestic and calm temper of

Christ, summed up in that marvellous saying, Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him. Mark the tremendous assumption—that the critic is always wrong. Never a word is said against the Son of Man that can be justified. More, no one ever speaks against the Son of Man without sinning. But the sin does not place him beyond the reach of mercy. He will be—forgiven. The sentence might have ended differently. It might have been, Whosoever shall speak against the Son of Man shall be—answered? silenced? punished? No—forgiven. Did Christ ever assert His Divinity more absolutely and yet more benignantly?

II. Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. There is one sin so heinous that it closes for all ages and in all worlds every door of mercy. The soul that sins it will never be revived by any Divine spring. It is no mysterious transgression to be struck upon at an unknown stage in the prodigal's path. It is no sudden, angry blasphemy. Whoever fears that he has committed it and prays for pardon is worlds away from it. It is the sin of those who know Christ in His essence, who realise His Spirit for what He is, and who deliberately call Him unclean. The historical Christ may be misjudged. Our teachers may misrepresent Him. We may speak a word against Him without the purpose deliberately to sever our life from His. But when His Spirit—the Spirit of compassion and purity—is known and hated, then the endless alienation has begun.

III. Compassion is the first word which describes the Spirit of Christ. It is a deep word—deeper almost than love, as the mother knows who has seen her child in the delirium of fever. Christ came to bring in the reign of

righteousness, but before and after justice is pity. The march of justice is slow: to be tracked by altars of sacrifice. Slowly we come to purer laws, but meanwhile deepest in man's lot is suffering that cannot wait. To this Christ stretched forth His hand. Marking as He did with pity those who knew their evil case, and with a deeper pity those who did not, He went about healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. He set in motion the while those mighty forces that are gradually transforming the world. But compassion had to do its work first, and when justice is done in the ideal commonwealth, compassion will take up the work again. But He saw the universal misery as the result of sin. The fangs of the Serpent had done this. He set Himself, therefore, not to reform, but to save. He believed that men could be saved. His inseparable following from the very dregs of society proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was for publicans and harlots. He lowered not a jot the standard of purity while He declared that those who came to Him would in no wise be cast out. When at last He lifted His eyes to God from His long brooding over earthly woe, His thought was of peace and joy. This is the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of compassion, of purity, of hope. To see this and to speak against it is the blasphemy that eternally severs the creature from the Creator.—W. Robertson Nicoll.

Moral Insensibility of Sinners.

“And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.”—Matthew 13:14.

Our subject is the sinner's spiritual insensibility; and the text leads us to

consider its figurative representation, its universal symptoms, and its grand discoverer.

I. *Its Figurative Representation.* "This people's heart is waxed gross." In Isaiah, the word, "fat" is applied to the heart instead of "gross." Fat—the most unfeeling and encumbering part of the animal creature; a man distinguished by grossness and fatness is dull, heavy, unimpressible. Insensibility is the idea. The Bible represents the sinner as having a hardened heart, a stony heart, etc.; and represents him morally as being asleep, dead, sometimes "twice dead." The moral heart of the sinner is so fat with pride, selfishness, carnality and worldliness, that it is almost "past feeling." The moral nerves are buried in the "fat." This moral insensibility is: 1. Criminal. It is not the normal condition of the soul; it is the result of a sinful course. Is 2. Dangerous. It is a moral disease of the most alarming character. Is 3. Temporary. It will not continue for ever. The heart must one day be quickened, either by the convictions of the Gospel, or by the flash of retribution.

II. *Its Universal Symptoms.* "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand," etc. 1. Want of spiritual understanding. They hear the law and the Gospel; hear the echoes of Sinai and of Calvary, but they do not understand the spiritual import. All that the most powerful sermons do is to ring on the hearing nerve, and then die away in sound. There is no understanding. The condition of the soul is too dull and heavy, too "fat," to put forth any effort to penetrate the Divine meaning of what is heard. It recoils from thinking on religious subjects in a religious way. 2. Want of spiritual perception "Seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." Pictures of Divine things, both in nature and in the Bible, are brought close to the eye of sense, and

yet the soul sees them not. Rational statements of Divine things are brought close to the eye of understanding, and yet the soul perceives them not. The spiritual eye is full of evil, and all is dark within. The soul can only see in the object what it brings to it, and as it has not the Divine spirit of things in it, it sees not the Divine in outward objects. A thick haze of sensuousness and sin hides the spiritual from the soul's eye.

III. *Its Grand Discoverer.* "In them is fulfilled." Or, is being fulfilled, is now in the course of illustration, what the old prophets said. It is here taught that the great discoverer of the moral insensibility of the sinner is the teaching of Christ. The life and teaching of Christ have brought out to the view of the universe, in aspects of hugest hideousness, the moral insensibility of the sinner's soul. Take the conduct of the Jewish nation, or rather the Sanhedrim, as the representative of that nation in relation to Christ, as exhibiting the hardness of the human soul. The members of that Jewish council had, by the teaching and life of Christ, the Divinest things brought in the most powerful way to their ears, and the most commanding form to their eyes, and yet they understood not, neither did they perceive. They witnessed His miracles, they heard His sermons; they knew the unearthly tenor of His life, and yet they were so blind and hard that they went on, in the face of all, to crucify Him. More, they witnessed the wonders of His crucifixion; they were convinced of His resurrection. The wonders of the Pentecost must have assured them that He was gone to heaven; and yet, blind and hardened, they continued to persecute, even unto death, the disciples who advocated His cause. Truly this child was set for the rise and fall of many in Israel, and the thoughts of many hearts were revealed by Him. Christ

revealed the moral heart of His age, and His Gospel ever since discovers the awfully hardened condition of man. Man's awful moral insensibility is seen in two ways. 1. In his opposition to the Gospel. His infidel calumnies and his bloody persecutions, etc., show this. 2. In his indifference to the Gospel. The fact that millions upon millions hear the Gospel and see it, and yet have no vital sympathy with it is an awful illustration of the fact that "the people's heart is waxed gross." Oh, haste the day when the Gospel trump shall not only be heard throughout the land, but when its blasts shall grow so loud and startling as to reach the dullest ear and rouse into living action the dullest soul!—David Thomas.

The Unshakeable Church.

"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matthew 16:18.

I. *What Was the Rock?*—First, then, what was this rock on which the Saviour said He would build His Church? Was it Peter, as the word seems to imply, and even directly to state? Sometimes Protestants have vehemently denied it, because they were afraid that by admitting so much they would be conceding all the claims of Rome. I have no such fear. I think in a sense it was Peter, and the company of Apostles of whom he was the acknowledged leader; for it was indeed upon their rocklike witness, against which all the powers of the world could not prevail, that the Church of all the ages grew. It was built, as we read in another place, upon "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." But if the rock was Peter, it was Peter made

a new man by the mighty truth which he had just confessed—this truth, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Apostles, after all, were only the upper stratum of the rock, if we might so speak, the part which jutted above the surface, while underneath was the solid bed-layer, deeper than the earth, deep as the universe, this solid bed-layer of truth that Christ their Master was Divine, that the words which He spoke were true as heaven, and that His life and power were eternal and indestructible. And we are all rocks if we believe that, from Peter down to the humblest person of the present day. The veriest human feebleness becomes as solid and immovable as the ground under your feet as soon as there enters into it the conviction that Christ is God, that His word cannot be broken, and that you are held fast by Him and His promises in changeless power and everlasting love.

There is room in the Church for the weakest faith. We read that hay, and wood, and stubble even, get in, to be purified by fire; but the strength of the building is in its rocklike souls. Upon rock does Christ build His Church, and He wants rock for the building up of any Church—rocklike members, rocklike deacons, rocklike teachers in the Bible classes and Sunday schools, rocklike preachers, men that know in whom they have believed and what they have believed, and speak out with clear, unfaltering certainty the things which they have seen and felt and heard of God.

II. *Shifting Sands.*—I think there never was a time when that was more needed than it is to-day, there never was a more urgent demand made for it. We live in an age of almost general unsettlement. You can hardly think of a department in which there are not doubtful minds and divided opinions; all questions seem to be in a state of solution, nothing fixed and determined.

We want rock; and the real deep hearts of men everywhere, whether they know it or not, are always saying, Away from us, ye who preach negations and doubts and darkness, who come and sit upon the threshold of our hearts like some poet's raven croaking out a dismal "Nevermore"; away with you; and come ye, John and Paul, and all such clear-voiced witnesses, with the glow of hope on your faces and the music of conviction in your tones. That is the message we need; that is the message which this age needs, and which Christ would have His representatives give. He builds His Church upon rock.

III. What Is Christ's Church?—The Church is the company, now indeed quite innumerable, of disciple-like souls who are for ever and ever learning of Him, some of them, the greater number, beholding His face, and serving Him day and night in His temple; and the rest not seeing Him yet, but rejoicing in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In a word, the Church is the faithful souls of every place and name known and unknown to whom His name is unutterably dear, His words more precious than fine gold, who love Him with a love that is more than human, who trust Him with a trust that is stronger than life or death, whose eager desire is to obey Him and serve Him, and whose fervent prayer for ever and ever is to get His truth made known, His salvation proved, and His name lifted above every name, until at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Upon all these, wherever they are, the Saviour looks down as with the joy of one who looks upon a noble possession, and He says, "They are my Church, my Church; and there is no other, no other."

IV. The Church's Indestructibility. Lastly, this Church of living and loving souls was to be and will for ever be indestructible. From the first He gave this solemn pledge about it, stak-

ing His truthfulness upon the word, and His very existence, indeed, upon the word, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell"—and He meant by that all possible forces that could come out of hell—"shall not prevail against it." The Church is indestructible. That which He called My Church, which was to Him as the apple of His eye, His dear and peculiar possession—the Church of living souls cemented together, and bound to Him by an infinite and immortal love—that will never know change or decay. There will always be upon this earth a never-diminishing and ever-increasing number of souls, men and women to whom He is more than all things else in the world, who serve Him with the perfect liberty of a joyful self-surrender, who would rather die than deny Him because He died for them, and to whom the hope of seeing His face and enjoying Him for ever is the main strength, consolation, and ecstasy of living.—J. G. Greenhough.

Sacrifice.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."—Matthew 16: 24-25.

I. Woven into the very texture of life, giving to it its sternness and its pathos, making it oftentimes a marvel or a tragedy, fixed by a mysterious law as the condition of fuller life of fruitful work and of assured glory, is the principle of sacrifice.

II. Sacrifice is the highest and the noblest act of a loving soul. There is a royalty in it that wins our instinctive homage. In it a man's or woman's true self—the God-like regenerate self—that is so generally

hidden and cramped by selfishness and conventionality is shown in its beauty and majesty; too loving to be selfish, too great to be conventional, splendid in its scorn of falsehood and wrong, it is a power of God which accomplishes an eternal work.

But we look away from this idealised manhood and womanhood, and we learn the secret of this transfiguring power of sacrifice.

Upon a Cross, uplifted between earth and heaven, pouring out His life in shame and agony, in darkness and dereliction, hangs the Son of Man, conquering the world and the devil, sin and death, by the uttermost sacrifice, and winning the victory and glory and crown of sacrifice for all humanity, consecrating pain and sorrow, and throwing upon the dread mystery of evil the light of the eternal purpose there fulfilled in love. "It is finished."

III. The disciples of the Crucified should be as their Master. Sharers of His life, they must follow Him in sacrifice.

Consider first some of the things that concern chiefly the outward life:—

1. Time is to be offered as a perpetual offering. First, by withdrawing, saving it from selfish uses. Secondly, by the watchful seizure and use of opportunities.

2. Work is an acceptable offering as we do it for God, and not as only for man.

3. Speech is a faculty to be used in God's service. So, too, in the things that belong to the inward life, sacrifice should find scope and material, as the human will is merged in the Divine will.

- (1) Thought should be so directed in prayer and watchfulness, so taught by meditation on holy things, that it may be won from the folly and evil, the malice and the passion, the foolish imaginations, and the sentimentality that so often hold it, and that it

may be surrendered, held as a little kingdom in which God only shall reign, a place in which He shall ever speak and be always heard, the voice of eternal Truth.

(2) The affections, too, must be sincerely offered, ruled in the spirit of sacrifice that they may be both centred and satisfied in God.

(3) Our inclinations, too, often conflict with the call of God, with the duties and claims of life, with Christian principles as we have been made to understand them. These also must be yielded lovingly and patiently.

4. And there is another form of sacrifice. What is the particular sorrow, suffering, loss, that is the trial of life? It is a matter in which the will may be offered to God. As Christ completed the offering of His life upon the cross, so our spiritual troubles are a cross in which we, too, may truly offer ourselves as a complete and consummated sacrifice, which will effect to the full all that love can ask or desire.—G. Brett.

Religious Excitement.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."—Matthew 17: 4.

Although there is no necessity to give much heed to the words of one who, when he spoke them, was so startled and confused that he knew not what he said, yet I suppose, in truth, St. Peter was right in the former part of his saying and wrong in the latter.

I. *Why Did God Bestow Upon Us the Power of Religious Emotion?* It is certain that no power, no faculty of the soul, was given in vain. Each has its proper use and end; its proper exercise, its proper degree, and its proper relation to other powers and

faculties. It must be so with religious emotion. God sends this religious emotion to many persons in many ways. A deep stirring of the heart and conscience comes to most people in the events of their own lives. What is to be said of these occasional times of excited feeling?—

1. That no man must take religious feeling for religion.

2. That God gives these periods of strong feeling as mighty helps to our weak and wavering courage; that they are a spur to the halting obedience, and a goad to the reluctant will.

II. But I think these times of unusual religious fervour have another use. They open to the soul visions of a state of love and joy and heavenly-mindedness, which, if afterwards they turn into nothing but regret and longing, nevertheless leave behind them a blessing.

III. *How Far Is Religious Emotion to Form Any Part of Our Daily Religious Life*, or, in other words, how far are the feelings to be regularly employed in the service of God? I have done with exceptional religious emotion. What shall we say as to ordinary religious emotion? Is it a good thing, or a bad thing? Assuredly, our feelings were not given us for the purpose of being crushed out. Our religion is not one of mere dry duty. The very fact that love holds so prominent a place in it is a proof that, at least, some amount of religious feeling is necessary for a true religious life. But supposing there is in the daily religious life of some more of the element of excitement. Supposing that there are not a few, in whom nothing better than a naturally restless disposition, or a craving after emotional stimulants in spiritual things, accounts for their enjoyment of many church services, much preaching and the like, no one will affirm that the motive which actuates such persons is a very high one. Their

religious acts must rank far lower than such as are done from principle and a sense of duty; and though I do not wish to speak of those acts as very meritorious, I come back to the old question: why did God make us able to enjoy certain things more than others? Why did God implant in us, though far more in some than in others, a craving after what may move, and stir, and perchance elevate the soul? Take any keen, eager, impulsive, excitable person, may I not believe that God gave such person the power of quick impulse and eager aspiration for some worthy end?—W. Walsham Howe.

Unbelief.

"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you! how long shall I suffer you?"—Matthew 17:17.

The disciples had the power to cast out devils. They tried and failed. They were weak in Christ's absence; they had been dejected by His previous words about His death, and now by His withdrawal to the mountain, and so they had been unsuccessful. They could not cast out because of their unbelief. The child's father was at his wit's end. He had had a poor trembling faith, if any. The scribes and others with none at all were maliciously chuckling over their failure. To them all Christ comes straight from the Transfiguration, and when he sees their grief, these words which express holy impatience, endless pity, and personal sorrow are wrung from Him. They are—

I. *A Cry of Pain*.—We can understand how the sight should have been more than ordinarily sorrowful to Him, from its sharp contrast with the Transfiguration, and therefore there was pressed out what was ordinarily hidden, the sharp pain and real

grief which it was to Him to walk among men.

We all know what uncongenial society means, but perhaps we do not give sufficient prominence to this phase of Our Saviour's life. He was the "man of Sorrows"; "Himself bare our sicknesses," and other passages speaking of Him as bearing the burden of sin, do not point only to His death on the Cross, but to all His earthly life. Remember His nature, perfect purity, perfect love, perfect knowledge, acute human sensibility, and take all these as heightening the daily martyrdom which it was to Him to dwell among men. We see but little of it, but it was most real, and all this was borne for us, and He bears it all still.

II. A Word of Loving Remonstrance. It is not a word of anger, but of remonstrance, seeking to cure, and that is how He stands before human unbelief.

III. A Promise of Infinite Forbearance and Abiding Presence.—Christ recognises in the disciples' weakness without Him a necessity for His still continuing with them. He is staid by their need of Him, as a mother by her tottering child. And in like manner the second clause is really: "How long will you draw on my forbearance with nothing but the under thought that it is inexhaustible?" So we have the assurance of His pitying presence with us, and that presence is the cure, if we will, for all our ills, and of His endless long suffering. He never goes away from any of us. We cannot break the covenant of His love.—A. Maclaren.

Reversal of Judgment.

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."—Matthew 19: 30.

I. This Is a Saying to Make Us

Pause, full of deep suggestiveness, applicable to many spheres of life and religion. It should lead to self-scrutiny to be thus told authoritatively that in the spiritual world there will be a complete reversal of human judgment, such moral surprises as that the first and the last should change places. How true it is we sometimes see even here, true of men, and nations, and Churches. Innumerable are the illustrations of how God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. It is a commonplace of history and experience. The fable of the hare and the tortoise is only a parable of life. Again and again has first in time been last in reaching the goal; first in privilege been last in achievement; first in position been last in permanent power.

II. And If This Is So Even in Such Palpable Instances, How Much Truer Is It in the Things of the Spirit, in the kingdom of Heaven which cometh not with observation. The spiritual world is a secret world. There an act is judged not by its size; not even by its good result, but by its motive alone; and a man is judged not by the place he fills in men's minds, not by the splash he makes in the world, but by his spirit alone. Character will be stripped bare, and only moral worth will remain. The things we thought goodness, the things which deceived us, which we looked on as of first importance, will be seen as they are. So that many that are first are last, and many that are last are first.

Even now, though often late, justice is done, and contemporary judgment is reversed, and we can see the truth of our text. The Jews were first in privilege, but the Gentiles laid hold of eternal life, and the favoured people were left a broken branch on the tree. And in the Christian Church again and again it has been not the mighty, the noble, the wise, those

patently first to the eye, who have been called to high service, but the poor and the weak, and the foolish; and the last has been first. There is another judgment, according to intrinsic spiritual worth, and that will be the final judgment of all.

III. *Above All, Let Us Ask the Question of Ourselves as Individuals.* Our virtues and graces, the things that people admire in us, or that we admire in ourselves, may be only tending to our deterioration, if we have lost sight of the essential thing, if our hearts are not pure from the taint of self.

IV. *But There Is More Than Warning in These Deep Words.* There is also a message of hope to all who feel themselves last, the despondent, all who think themselves overmatched in the warfare of life, and outrun in the race of life. What God asks from all, the high and the low, the first and the last, is a sincere heart in which burns the pure flame of love. Whatever be our scale of earthly precedence, though it be reckoned last in our purblind judgment, that is first—so far first that it has no second.

—H. Black.

Punishment.

"And (Jesus) said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever."—Matthew 21:19.

"Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever"; and presently the fig-tree withered away. A stern sentence surely, and executed with dreadful swiftness, and for that very reason, worthy of our notice; since it concerns us very deeply to remember, that although the Lord our God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, He who is very Holiness cannot bear with wilful and unrepented sin. He who is the Truth itself may not endure hypocrisy, and

the pretence of righteousness in those that have it not.

Consider carefully what the real forgiveness of sins is, and what are its conditions. There are two great facts about sin and forgiveness:—

I. *In This World There Is No "Forgiveness of Sins."* Nature is unflinchingly, cruelly just. Those who keep her laws shall prosper, those who break them must suffer. We all recognise this to some extent in outward things, and shape our course accordingly. We know that the fire will burn us, that the deep waters will drown us, and we call him a madman who acts as if it were not so, and suffers for his neglect. But the laws of our moral nature are not less stern. We may dream, if we will, that we can play for a while with the burning fire of lust or anger, and come away unscathed, but it is not so; before we know it, our souls are seared and branded with scars that nothing earthly can ever efface. Let us never fancy that we can sin a sin and be done with it. When you are tempted to sin, think what you are doing not to yourself only, nor your neighbours, but to others, whom maybe you will never know.

In this world there is no "Forgiveness of Sins." Yet we believe that God will pardon us and heal us, if we turn to Him rightly; it was for this that Jesus Christ died upon the cross; that we might be cleansed and restored, and live with Him for ever.

II. *There Is No Forgiveness At All Without Repentance.*—Real repentance means doing as well as feeling; and the first thing to do is to read carefully through that sad chapter of the past which we would so gladly close for ever, in order that we may truly know what we have been doing; and laying our sin before God in all its meanness, stripped of every excuse, implore His pardon. It may be, of course, if we have been griev-

ously sinning against others, that our conscience will bid us make open confession and reparation; but in every case there must be absolute plainness with ourselves, absolute submission to God. You see it not a pleasant nor an easy thing to repent; think of this too when you are going to sin.

III. Consider the Especial Sin and Its Punishment Which Are Denounced in Our Text: the sin of spiritual barrenness, which I may call ineffectualness, the failure to help our fellow-creatures, and its punishment, the loss of power to help.

Day by day, and hour by hour, the choice of good and evil is offered to you, and every time you choose the better part you are bearing fruit acceptable to God; every time you yield, and choose the worst, you are losing power; and remember this, that if you go on refusing God's service, and doing what seems easiest, a time will come when it will be too late, when the will is utterly paralysed, and repentance is only despair. To such an one the judgment is come in his lifetime; on him already the terrible doom is pronounced, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." Is it not the experience of all of you, that already your own shortcomings have prevented you from boldly rebuking vice, or stretching out a hand of help, when you would gladly have done it, if you had dared?

Let us learn of Jesus Christ how the poor wasted lives, which we manage so ill for ourselves, may become rich and useful—these are His words: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing."

—J. H. F. Peile.

The Divine Christ.

"*What think ye of Christ?*"—Matthew 22:42.

The often-quoted question, "What think ye of Christ?" should be, "What think ye of *the* Christ?" Jesus was not asking the Pharisees for an opinion about Himself, the speaker addressing them, as He had asked his disciples on a previous occasion (ch. 16:13). He was referring to the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, and without now pressing His own claim to be the Messiah, He was asking what idea the Pharisees had as to this great Hope of Israel. They had been questioning Him; He now turns upon them with a penetrating inquiry.

I. There Is Testimony to the Christ in the Old Testament.—Jesus quotes ancient prophecy. It may be said that He would thus find an *argumentum ad hominem* when arguing with a Jew. But it is evident that our Lord appealed to the Old Testament as to an authority which He Himself valued. Thus He gives His own authority to support the Divine message of the prophets, and He justifies us in searching these Scriptures for the testimony they bear concerning Him (John 5:39). The value of the Old Testament in this respect is not that it shows how certain men were gifted with a miraculous foresight, by means of which they predicted the advent and life of Christ. This would be interesting chiefly as throwing light on the powers of the prophets, but it would not be of much practical use to us. We may see the Old Testament setting forth important truths about Christ. It foreshadows in a way to prepare the reader for understanding Christ. Thus it has its own Gospel message.

II. The Old Testament Testifies to the Divine Glory of the Christ.—Jesus selects one striking instance of this specific testimony. Psalm 110 plainly represents the Messiah as greater than David, for, while written in the name of the king, it yet makes the founder of the Jewish dynasty

address his descendant as "my Lord." This argument holds good, whether we believe the psalm to have been composed by the shepherd-king, or follow the recent criticism that rejects its Davidic authorship. For even in the latter case, it is plain that the inspired writer of the psalm taught that the Messiah was to be so much greater than His famous ancestor that it would be seemly for David to address Him as "my Lord." This truth, then, was in the Old Testament. Yet those who most honoured their ancient Scriptures did not perceive it. We need the Spirit of Christ to help us to understand the prophecies of Christ.

III. Our Lord Gave the Highest Interpretation to the Old Testament Prophecies of the Christ.—This fact is important in itself, as a light on the prophecies. But it is much more weighty when we consider it in relation to Jesus Himself. We know that He claimed to be the Messiah, although He did not make that claim public till the end of His life. Therefore His interpretation of prophecy must be applied to His thought about Himself. He was calm, unselfish, unambitious, lowly in heart and life. Yet He argued for the very highest attributes of the Name which He knew to be His own. Was He not speaking out of the depth of His self-consciousness? If He used such words as are here before us, He could not have been satisfied with being regarded as only a man. In veiled language to the Jews, but in language that is open as the day to us, Jesus claims to be Divine, and His character, His life, and His work all agree with His unique claim.—W. F. Adeney.

The Woe of the Hypocrite.

"*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*"—Matthew 23:13.

The word "woe" is repeated again and again in this chapter, and yet the reader of it fails to realise what the woe denounced precisely was. The suggestive word is left by Christ. It is enough to tell these men that they are surely heaping up woe for themselves in the latter day. Some hint of the coming woe may be given in the closing verses of the chapter, which indicate a time of sorest humiliation, of hopeless ruin. Jewish literature gives quite as bad a picture of them as Jesus did. "Fear not true Pharisees, but greatly fear painted Pharisees," said a Jewish ruler to his wife, when he was dying. "The supreme tribunal," said another, "will duly punish hypocrites who wrap their talliths around them to appear—what they are not—true Pharisees."

I. What Things Were Heaping Up Woe for These Hypocrites.—Our Lord marks several things in which their hypocrisy was especially manifest. 1. Their professing to be spiritual teachers, yet keeping the people from receiving spiritual truth (ver. 13). 2. They joined devout prayers for desolate widows with a grasping covetousness that seized the widows' property and ruined them. 3. They made proselytes, so to say, to righteousness, but compelled them to be as bitter, base, and uncharitable as themselves. 4. They made foolish distinctions, which they took care did not hinder themselves. 5. They appeared to be most delicately scrupulous, but in their conduct they allowed the grossest and most abominable licence. 6. They were supremely anxious about the *look* of things; they were wickedly indifferent about the *real condition* of things. 7. They wanted *men* to admire them in public, but they dare not let any one see their private lives. It is easy enough to see that, for such men, a revealing day must come, and, when it came, it would prove humiliation and woe indeed. It is woe for such men to be found out. It was

a beginning of woe for Jesus thus to show them up before the people and make them objects of scorn and detestation.

II. What Persons Suffered Woe Because of the Hypocrite.—For the religious hypocrite is a *woe-maker*. And this point may be opened out with some freshness. Every religiously insincere man: 1. Makes woe for himself. He has no enemy like himself. 2. He makes woe for the religious community to which he belongs. He prays against their prayers; he brings disgrace on them when he is found out. 3. He makes woe for society, which learns, by his failure, the misery of mutual mistrust. 4. He even brings dishonour on the name and cause of God.—Robert Tuck.

The Coming of Christ.

"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"
—Matthew 24:3.

After dooming the temple to desolation, "Jesus went out." The action was significant (Luke 19:44). In every case the departure of the Saviour is a solemn event. "His disciples," viz., Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mark 13:3), called His attention to the magnificence of the structure. Men are naturally influenced by material glories. They had especially noticed the greatness of the stones (Mark 13:1), and were astonished when Jesus declared that these should become disjointed and overthrown. How "slow of heart" are even good men "to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Micah 3:12; Jer. 26:18)! What havoc in the material world is wrought through moral obliquity! "And as they sat" in full view of the temple and city (ver. 3), where the Shec-

hinah had rested after leaving the temple and the city, and whence it ascended into the heavens—awful presage of the desolation of the temple and city by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the people by the Babylonians (Ezek. 11:23):—the action of Jesus here therefore was not only the expression of a tender, sorrowful, patriotic, human sympathy, but moreover a parable and a prophecy of momentous import.

I. Christ Was Coming in His Kingdom.—1. The advent of the King Messiah was the constant subject of ancient promise. 2. It was accordingly the chief expectation of the Jews. 3. But so dazzled were they with the splendour of the imagery, in which the coming of Messiah in His glory is set forth in prophecy, that they overlooked the predictions setting forth an earlier advent of Messiah in humiliation. 4. Hence, when Jesus came in that earlier advent His people were offended in Him.

II. He Comes in Spirit and Power.—1. So He came upon the memorable Day of Pentecost. Jesus had been corporeally, transiently present with His disciples as their Comforter, and He promised, after His removal from them in that capacity, to come again as their permanent or abiding Comforter in His Divine Spirit (John 14:15-21). 2. That advent was quickly followed by the "end of the world," or, more properly, the "consummation of the age." The Levitical dispensation ended with the destruction of the temple. For the temple was the very centre of that system. "The temple was destroyed: (1) *Justly*; because of the sins of the Jews. (2) *Mercifully*; to take away from them the occasion of continuing in Judaism. (3) *Mysteriously*; to show that the ancient sacrifices were abolished, and that the whole Jewish economy was brought to an end, and the Christian dispensation introduced" (Clarke). 3. The

judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem was a figure of the judgment of the great day. The scattered Jewish Christians found relief in the judgment which brought desolation to their persecutors (Mark 13:13; Jas. 5:7-9).

III. *He Will Yet Come Visibly, in Power and Glory.*—1. He will then come "in the clouds." (1) He will come upon a glorious throne. (2) He will come with a myriad retinue. Clouds of angels. Clouds of spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12:1). 2. He will come to introduce the millennium. (1) He will begin that reign with judgments upon the obstinately wicked. The antichristian nations will be overthrown. (2) He will end that age with the final judgment upon the dead, small and great.

IV. *He Comes in the Article of Death.*—1. This is the "end of the age" to us as the term of our probation. 2. It is to us virtually the day of judgment. 3. Christ comes in person to receive to Himself His own (John 14:3). 4. Let us be admonished and prepare.—J. A. Macdonald.

A Guilty Conscience.

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.—Matthew 27:3-5.

The history of Judas teaches us three things. First: The power of one sinful feeling to counteract the influences of the best society. Judas was "one of the twelve." For nearly

three years he associated with the pure, loving-hearted John, the ardent and honest Peter, the truthful and upright James. Above all, with Jesus. What doctrines and prayers he heard! What dispositions and deeds he witnessed! But notwithstanding this all went for nothing with him. Like showers on rocks and sands. Why was this? The corrupt feeling of avarice was within, and this perverted all. It rotted all the good seeds that were thrown into him. Secondly: The power of man to conceal his sinful feelings from others. When Jesus, at the last supper, said, "One of you shall betray me," each began to say, "Lord, is it I?" They did not know who. We know not what is going on in the breast of others. Each is a world to himself. Thirdly: The power of conscience to inflict merited punishment. This is seen in the text. Here you have a guilty conscience in four aspects:—

I. *Waking Into Anguish at the Accession of New Light.* "When he saw that he was condemned, repented himself." First: The nature of the anguish which he now experienced. He "repented himself." Who shall estimate the misery represented by these words? This anguish was not the fear of punishment. He knew that he had done a popular act, and that his countrymen, perhaps, would make him a hero for ridding them of such a public disturber as Christ. It was the essential wrongness, not the personal consequences, of the act that pained him now. It is self-crimination, self-loathing, self-reprobation. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Secondly: The accession of the new light which produced it. "When he saw that he was condemned." He did not expect this result, when he perpetrated the deed. He had no unkind feeling, perhaps, towards Christ. Probably he thought his act would bring on the crisis in His history, which he in common with the other

disciples anticipated—His ascension to universal empire. But, when “he saw” the opposite result, then his conscience bounded into fury. Let Heaven cast new light upon the sinner’s deeds, and then conscience will start. This new light must come.

II. *Ineffectually Struggling to Obtain Relief.* He makes two useless efforts. First: Restitution in a wrong spirit. “He brought again the thirty pieces of silver,” &c. To his avaricious nature they were once very valuable, but now he felt they were curses. Conscience reverses our estimates. These silver pieces now seemed red with blood and hot with fire. He could not retain them. But the restitution was in a wrong spirit; it was from a selfish desire for relief and not from a self-sacrificing desire to make satisfaction for the injury. He makes—Secondly: Confession to the wrong party. To the chief priests and elders—not to God—he says, “I have sinned,” &c. The confession I take as a powerful testimony to two things. (1) To the moral freedom of human nature. Logically, we debate as to whether internal impulses and external circumstances do not coerce men, destroy their liberty of action, and make them slaves. An awakened conscience despises such logic and makes short work with it. It impels the man to say with all the emphasis of his nature—“I have sinned,” I am the author of the act; not my propensities or circumstances, but I. This confession is a powerful testimony. (2) To the moral purity of Christ’s life. “Innocent blood.” I can see a good reason why Christ elected such a man as Judas to be one of His disciples. He, being admitted into the inner circle of our Saviour’s social life, in common with other disciples, had every opportunity of judging of His real character; and now, therefore, his testimony to the purity of His life is far more powerful than the testimony of any other could possibly

be. Far more so for example than Pilate’s.—Pilate only saw the outward, Judas the inward.

III. *Heartlessly Repulsed by Guilty Associates.* “What is that to us? See thou to that.” “The ungodly,” says Bengel, “though associating in the commission of a crime, desert their associates when it has been accomplished.” The godly, though not taking part in the crime, endeavour, after its commission, to save the sinner’s soul. I submit three remarks on the conduct of these men. First: It was cruel. They were the tempters: they offered the bribe; and in doing so, no doubt they were genial and bland. Secondly: It was unavoidable. They had guilty consciences as well as Judas, and in this very matter too. Perhaps their consciences began to trouble them a little now. The guilty cannot, if they would, comfort the guilty. Thirdly: It was representative. It was a specimen of conduct that must ever take place under similar circumstances. It is so in hell. Every appeal of the tempted to his tempter will meet with the response, “What is that to us? See thou to that.” The infidel to his disciples, the debauchee to his victims, &c. The heartless response of every seducer in hell, to the agonising entreaties of his victim is, “What is that to us? See thou to that.” Your bland tempters must become your tormenting devils.

IV. *Plunging Into Eternity in Desperation.* He “went and hanged himself.” Two things here—First: The intolerableness of his existence. Life itself became an unbearable burden. Secondly: The irrationality of his existence. Conscience threw reason off its balance. If he had reasoned a moment, he would have known that suicide could neither destroy existence, conscience, sin, nor misery; but on the other hand would make all these more terribly real.

From this subject we infer—(1)

That there is a moral government over man in this world. A guilty conscience proves this. (2) That com-

punction is not conversion. (3) That a guilty conscience must find either hell or pardon.—The Homilist.

MARK

Relation of Devils to the Christian Religion.

"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone."—Mark 1:23.

The Bible is a revelation of a spiritual universe, and it teaches us many wonderful facts connected with its history. Amongst others there are two which bear upon the subject of the text. First: That in the spiritual universe, there is a world of fallen angels. It tells us of high intelligences who rebelled against the authority of their Creator and who are now "in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day," principalities, and powers of darkness. There is nothing improbable in this fact. All moral intelligences, however high and holy, have the power to fall, otherwise there would be no virtue in their obedience. Besides, men in all ages believe in the existence of such a spirit-world. Secondly: That these fallen angels take possession of human nature. They do so in two ways, in their persons, and in their influence. The New Testament presents us with what appear to be instances of actual personal possession, cases like that before us in which the evil spirit seems to have taken entire possession of the man, brain, heart and speech. I am not sure that fiends do not possess some men in this way now. In the other way, however, by their influence, we are sure they possess the world: they work "in the children of disobedience." The passage before

us suggests several things concerning them in their relation to Christianity.

I. That They Are Attracted to the Ministry of Christ.

First: Here is a devil coming to the house of God. Christ was now in the synagogue, the place of Jewish worship, and there the fiend appears. This is not a singular case; he enters all sanctuaries on earth, "the god of this world blindeth the eyes of men." The formality, carelessness, indifference, scepticism, of those who attend the ministry of the Gospel can scarcely be explained apart from the fact of Satanic agency.

Secondly: Here is a devil in the house of God in the person of a man. The evil spirit came not in a serpent form, or in some angelic shape; he came in a man. In men he lives, and by men he works, in our world.

Thirdly: Here is a devil in the house of God confronting even Christ Himself. Here is a wonderful sight, the worst and the best beings meeting face to face in that little synagogue at Capernaum, and, when meeting, both are in the body of a man. The Eternal Son of God is there in the body of a man, and the arch-enemy of the universe is there in the body of a man. They had perhaps never met before, and now they were there eye to eye. What a picture is this!

Fourthly: Here is a devil in the house of God excited by a sermon. Christ was the preacher on the occasion, and He had spoken with an "authority" all His own. The people we are told were "astonished." They felt the power of His words, and so did the devil, for he cried out, "Let

us alone." The words of Christ had struck deep into the depths of his depraved nature, and he "cries," not for mercy, he knew there was no mercy for him, the cry of devils is the cry of malignity, remorse, despair, terror.

Fifthly: Here is a devil in the house of God expelled from the man. At the command of Christ the devil came out of the man. This is Christ's work to eject the devil from human nature, and this is the work of the minister too. Unless the pulpit cast devils out of men it fails in its mission. The text suggests—

II. That They Have No Interest in the Redemption of Christ. "What have we to do with thee?" The expression denotes entire separation of interest. Thou and we have nothing in common; thou art a Saviour, but not for us; thou hast an ocean of mercy, but not a drop for us; thou hast power on earth to pardon sins, but no power to pardon ours. As thou art not come to save us, "let us alone." Thank God men have an interest in Christ as a Saviour. "He took not on him the nature of angels, he took on him the seed of Abraham." The text suggests—

III. That They Are in Dread of Destruction from Christ. "Art thou come to destroy us?" As if they had said, "We feel that destruction is before us." What destruction dost thou dread, fiend? The quenching of thine existence, conscience, character, memories? Not so, we think; such annihilations thou wouldest hail. It is the frustration of thy plans, the overthrow of thine empire that terrifies thee; and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He "became a partaker of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." What destruction is more terrible than that of the grand absorbing purpose of existence?

Thank God He has come to save man. "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," &c. The text suggests—

IV. That They Are Acquainted with the History of Christ. "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." What a testimony this to the purity and Divinity of Christ! "I know thee who thou art." Yes! I know thee, I have heard of thee for ages! The first promise, about "the seed of the woman," has been pealing in loudening thunders within me through many a century. I know thee! I have met thee in the faith of the patriarchs, in the enactments of Moses, and in the pictures of the prophets. I know thee! Devils know Christ. Christ once proposed the question to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" The reply was, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias," &c. So it is now. Men have different opinions of Christ; but amongst devils, they all agree as to who He is. Were He to say to them, Whom do fiends "say that I the Son of man am?" there would be but one answer, We "know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Their knowledge of Him is misery; our knowledge of Him is happiness. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The text suggests—

V. That They Are Repelled by the Words of Christ. What was Christ's answer to their cry? "Hold thy peace." Thy cries do not touch my heart; I have no compassion for thee; thy confession, though true, commends thee not to me. When Peter said to Christ, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona"; but here is the devil making

a similar confession, yet Christ rebukes him, and bids him hold his peace. Jesus never treats men thus. How did He treat the Canaanitish woman, blind Bartimæus, the dying thief? "Hold thy peace," devil!

In conclusion, this treatment which devils receive from the hand of Christ affords us—First: A glimpse of the Divine character. What sovereignty, independency, justice, and compassion are revealed in that "he took not on him the nature of angels." Secondly: A view of man's wonderful obligation to Christ. What wonderful love He has shown us! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—The Homilist.

An Eternal Sin.

"*In danger of eternal damnation.*"
—Mark 3:29.

Or—"guilty of an eternal sin." This is almost certainly the true rendering of the words of the Evangelist, from which some translators shrank as something strange and unusual, and took refuge in a word more easy to be explained and more closely related to cognate expressions.

I. *What May We Take It to Mean, This Description of a State, Which Men Seem to Have Hesitated Even to Write Down?* It means surely, first of all, a great mistake. You may notice that our blessed Lord had just been speaking about that mysterious blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which has so exercised the thoughts and guesses, and even terrors of men. It is this which brings man into the imminent danger of which we are thinking. Surely we are face to face with the possibility of a great mistake where a man gets so entirely out of sympathy with God that where there is God, he can only see an evil spirit; where there is goodness, he can only see malignity; where there

is mercy, he can only see cruel tyranny. The great mistake! It begins, perhaps, in the will. Life is presented with all its fascinating material; there is the deadly bias of disposition, while there is the make-weight of grace; and the will gives in. And the dishonoured will now seeks to justify its degradation by an appeal to the intellect. Sin is decried as an ecclesiastical bogey. And then from the intellect it goes to the heart. "I will pull down my barns, and build greater." This is the extent of the heart's ambition. See how the great mistake has spread! Self has deflected all the relations of life until the man has become denaturalised. He has made a great mistake—his relations to the world, to God, to self, are inverted unless God interferes, i.e., unless the man allows God to interfere; he is guilty of an eternal sin, in the sense of having made an irreparable mistake and missed the object for which he was created, the purpose for which he was endowed.

II. *But, Besides a Great Mistake, an Eternal Sin Means a Great Catastrophe.*

What a terrible consciousness to wake up to the thought that the position which God has given us, the talents, the intellect, the skill, have been abused by a real perversion of life, and that we have been only doing harm when we were meant to be centres of good! See how an eternal sin may mean an eternal catastrophe, where the forces of life have become mutinous and disobedient; where self-control has gone for ever, and anarchy or misrule riot across life, where there is the perversion of blessings which reaches its climax in the fact that man is the great exception in the order of nature; that while every other living thing is striving for its own good, man alone is found choosing what he knows to be for his hurt. There is no ruin to compare to it, no depravity so utterly depraved

as that which comes from a disordered and shattered human nature.

III. Lastly, We Are Face to Face with a Great Loss. "I do not wonder at what people suffer, but I wonder often at what they lose."

The loss of God out of life, which begins, it may be, with a deprivation, and is a disquieting pang, which, if it is not arrested, becomes death, which, if persisted in, becomes eternal, becomes utter and complete separation from God, which becomes what we know as hell—the condition of an eternal sin.—W. C. E. Newbolt.

Genesis of Evil.

"And Jesus said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. From from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within and defile the man."—Mark 7:20-23.

Our Lord here declares the human heart to be originative; that the vices which darken the world take their rise within us; in the mystery of the soul He teaches us to seek for the mystery of iniquity.

I. Let Us Observe Several Theories of the Origin of Evil Which Are Condemned by the Text.

1. The theory which finds the origin of evil in the physical world is thus condemned. Several sins mentioned in the text have nothing whatever to do with the body, and when fleshly sins are specified they are imputed to interior causes. Sin, then, can never be treated adequately whilst it is treated only medicinally.

2. The text condemns the theory which finds the origin of evil in the intellectual nature of man. Intellectual culture does not touch the iner-

tia, the blindness, the ingratitude, the selfishness, the cruelty, the wilfulness, which bring our acutest sense of guilt, our bitterest experiences of woe. And careful observers are beginning to see that the redemption of the intelligence is not the redemption of the heart; that the race will not be saved by intellect; and that it is easy to expect too much from the spread of knowledge.

3. The text condemns the theory which finds the origin of evil in the power of circumstances. Christ taught that human character is a question of soul and not of situation. He taught us to look into the infinite depths of the heart for the reasons of good and evil doing. And sin will not be cured by circumstances.

II. Christ's Treatment of Evil.—In the soul Christ declared that it took its origin, and in the soul Christ sought to deal with it—supplying a spiritual antidote for a spiritual plague. He sets before us the highest thoughts and ideals; He creates within us strong faith in these thoughts and ideals; He strengthens us in the inner man that we may scale the heights thus unveiled. The Cross is the symbol of pure thought; it is the truth, love, righteousness of God, appealing to the reason, heart, and conscience of the race. The New Testament is filled with this idea—the renewal of all things through the renewal of the soul.

1. We must remember the inwardness and spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin in the culture of our personal life.

We see here the necessity for that regeneration upon which Christ insists. The heart is the fountain of evil; it must be changed and become the fountain of good. "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again."

The perfecting of character throughout must be from within—must be worked out in sanctified thought, feel-

ing and will. Says Jacob Boehme in a deep passage, "All now depends on what I set my imagination upon." Setting his imagination upon the kingdom of God, upon the highest objects, patterns and callings of the spiritual universe, the believer conquers successively all selfishness and sensuality, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Let us set our thought on Christ, who is the Sum of all beauty, and that beauty shall dawn in us.

2. We must remember the spirituality of Christ's treatment of sin as we attempt the renovation of the world. It is the habit of some reformers to think very slightly of what they are pleased to consider the sentimentalism of Christianity. But was not Christ right in trusting everything to the power of sanctified thought and feeling? The history of the world is the history of thought. The catastrophe of the race arose in thought—in a thought from beneath. "And what the woman saw." Out of that look, imagination, desire, arose the vast tragedy. The great redeeming system began in a thought—in a thought from above. "It came into his heart to visit his brethren." Out of that generous thought arose the whole magnificent history of Israel.

—W. L. Watkinson.

The Holy House.

"My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer."—Mark 11:17.

It is significant that our Lord should have performed the authoritative and symbolical act of cleansing the temple *twice*—at the commencement, and again at the close, of His ministry. We learn that no real reformation had taken place in the religious habits of the chief priests and the people who frequented the

holy place; they continued to practise the abuses which had been already so justly and so sternly rebuked. And we learn also that Jesus, although hated and despised by the rulers, had abated none of His claims to authority and jurisdiction.

I. *The Occasion of Christ's Authoritative Interference.*—1. This was the abuse of the temple. The holy house had been erected for the manifestation of the Divine glory, the celebration of Divine worship, the realisation of Divine communion. No other material structure has ever possessed the sanctity which attached to this. There were grades of sanctity, culminating in the holy of holies; yet all the precincts and courts were consecrated to the God of Israel. To turn such a building to any secular purpose was an unjustifiable abuse. 2. The profanation of the temple. Three stages of profanation were referred to: vessels used for common purposes were carried through the courts; money was exchanged—foreign money, with the images, the superscription, the symbols, which denoted heathenism, for the shekels of the sanctuary; and doves and other victims, used for sacrifice and offerings, were openly bought and sold. Turning the sacred precincts to purposes of gain was a heinous offence against the majesty of the Lord of the temple. 3. But even this was not the worst, for there is implied the violation of the temple. The traffic which took place was distinguished by injustice and fraud: "Ye have made it a den of robbers." The family of the high priest are known to have made this merchandise a source of unlawful gain. In the exchange of money there was unfairness, in the sale of animals there was extortion. It was bad enough that in the Lord's house there should be trading, it was far worse that there should be rapacity and fraud.

II. *The Manner of Christ's Au-*

Authoritative Interference.—1. This was *independent*. Jesus took counsel of no one, but acted of His own accord, as One who had no superior to whom to refer. He acted in His own Name and in that of His Father. 2. It was *peremptory*. We feel that it was but seldom that the meek and lowly Jesus acted as on this occasion. There was an unsparing severity in His action and in His language, when rescuing the holy house from the profane intruders. He did well to be angry. 3. It was *impressive*. The priests, who profited by the robbery, were enraged; the scribes, who resented the exercise of authority by the Nazarene, were incensed; and the people, who witnessed this remarkable act, were astonished.

III. *The Justification by Christ of His Authoritative Interference.*—Our Lord not only acted; He taught and explained the meaning of His action. We cannot suppose that He was animated by any superstitious feelings in so acting, and the record shows us what were His motives. 1. He regarded the temple as the *house of His Father, God*. 2. It was in His view the *house of prayer*, and was to be reserved for communion between human spirits and Him who is the Father of spirits. 3. And it was intended for the service of all nations, which gave it a peculiar dignity and sacredness in His eyes. These considerations show why a Teacher, whose whole teaching was peculiarly spiritual, should display a zeal for the sanctity of a local and material representation of a Divine presence.

IV. *The Results of Christ's Authoritative Interference.*—1. Its immediate effect was to provoke the dread, the malice, and the plots of the scribes and priests. The incident occurred but a few days before our Lord's crucifixion, and it appears to have led to that awful event. In their own interests, the religious lead-

ers of the Jews felt themselves constrained to crush the power of One whose conduct and teaching were so inconsistent with their own. Thus one of the highest exercises of our Lord's righteous authority was the occasion of His most cruel humiliation and shameful death. 2. Its more remote effect has been to enhance the conception entertained of Christ's character and official dignity and power. Humanity is God's true temple, too long defiled by the occupation of the spiritual foe, and desecrated to the service of sin. Christ is the Divine Purifier, who dispossesses the enemy and restores the sanctuary to its destined ends, the indwelling, the worship, and the glory of the Eternal!—J. R. Thomson, M.A.

Casting into the Treasury.

"And Jesus sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which makes a farthing."—Mark 12: 41.

Take the incident of this Gospel story. May it not suggest to us a special fact of immense significance not apparent on the surface of things? That Temple court, those thirteen brazen chests, that procession of contributors, each with his special offering—may they not represent to us, in idea at least, a picture or parable of what is going on perpetually in the drama of human life, and at the same time bring before us a vision of the unseen, unheard judgment of Christ upon the works and ways of men?

I. *Every Single Life Is in Itself an Offertory, a Contribution, Made to the Great Sum of Human Influences and Examples.* Some faint resemblance to this idea of a common

treasury to which all in their several ways contribute may be seen in the demands and expectations of men and women when united in social groups. The rich and powerful are welcome as the "benefactors" of society, and society rewards them with its smiles. Modest and humble goodness may pass by with its slender offering, rich only in the coin of love and self-sacrifice, but such coinage has no appreciable value in the eyes of the "children of this world."

II. As a Contrast, Let Us Look at the Spirit in Which Our Lord Appraised the Two Types of Character that passed before Him in the Temple court, and notice which of the two appeared to Him to be the pure gold and which the showy tinsel.

1. First, we cannot fail to see that the test applied by Christ to human conduct here, as always, was a spiritual test. In the matter of giving He pronounced that the vital question is not how much you give, but what element of sacrifice enters into your gift. Love and self-surrender are the core of practical Christianity. "My son, give Me thy heart," is the sum and substance of all the commandments. In God's sight he who does not give himself as the best part of his offering, with no eye to any future recompense,

gives what has no spiritual value.

2. Another point is that there may be more spiritual nobleness, more of the morally sublime, in some obscure, hidden life that hardly any one notices than in many of the conspicuous acts of distinguished persons which are recorded in the pages of history. We are reminded by our Lord's praise of the poor widow that obscurity is a condition, sometimes the necessary condition, of much of the most self-denying work that is done in the world.

III. Our Own Experience May Teach the Lesson That It Is Not Often to the Wealthy, the Powerful, or the Brilliant That We Owe the Deepest Gratitude for timely aid, generous sympathy, or ennobling influence.

It should never be forgotten that the true givers, the true helpers of mankind, are those whose efforts cost them much labour and suffering, and who, in seeking the good of others, purchase it with their own heart's blood. Only in those who cast into life's treasury their love and sympathy, the most precious of offerings, charged with sore travail of soul and much inward pain, does Christ recognise the image and likeness of His own perfect sacrifice of Himself.—J. W. Shephard.

LUKE

The Miraculous Conception.

"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—Luke 1:35.

I. The Importance of the Doctrine as an Article of the Faith.—It is evidently the foundation of the whole

distinction between the character of Christ in the condition of a man and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way, His intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted; than the prophets enjoyed, when their minds were enlightened by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures speak

a very different language: they tell us that "the same God who spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His Son"; evidently establishing a distinction of Christianity from preceding revelations, upon a distinction between the two characters of a prophet of God, and of God's Son. Moses bore to Jesus, as we are told, the humble relation of a servant to a son. And lest the superiority on the side of the Son should be deemed a mere superiority of the office to which He was appointed, we are told that the Son is "higher than the angels; being the effulgence of God's glory, the express image of His person"; the God "whose throne is for ever and ever, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness." And this high dignity of the Son is alleged as a motive for religious obedience to His commands, and for reliance on His promises. It is this, indeed, which gives such authority to His precepts and such certainty to His whole doctrine, as render faith in Him the first duty of religion. But we need not go so high as to the Divine nature of our Lord to evince the necessity of His miraculous conception. It was necessary to the scheme of redemption, by the Redeemer's offering of Himself as an expiatory sacrifice, that the manner of His conception should be such that He should in no degree partake of the natural pollution of the fallen race whose guilt He came to atone, nor be included in the general condemnation of Adam's progeny. On the other hand, it were not difficult to show that the miraculous conception, once admitted, naturally brings up after it the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation. The miraculous conception of our Lord evidently implies some higher purpose of His coming than the mere business of a teacher. The business of a

teacher might have been performed by a mere man enlightened by the prophetic spirit.

II. Having seen the importance of the doctrine of the miraculous conception as an article of our faith, let us, in the next place, consider *the sufficiency of the evidence by which the fact is supported*.—We have for it the express testimony of two out of the four evangelists—of St. Matthew, whose Gospel was published in Judea within a few years after our Lord's Ascension; and of St. Luke, whose narrative was composed (as may be collected from the author's short preface) to prevent the mischief that was to be apprehended from some pretended histories of our Saviour's life, in which the truth was probably blended with many legendary tales. It is very remarkable that the fact of the miraculous conception should be found in the first of the four Gospels—written at a time when many of the near relations of the holy family must have been living, by whom the story, had it been false, had been easily confuted; that it should be found again in St. Luke's Gospel, written for the peculiar use of the converted Gentiles, and for the express purpose of furnishing a summary of authentic facts, and of suppressing spurious narrations. Was it not ordered by some peculiar providence of God, that St. Matthew wrote, and the Greek congregations for which St. Luke wrote, should find an express record of the miraculous conception each in its proper Gospel? Or if we consider the testimony of the writers simply as historians of the times in which they lived, without regard to their inspiration, which is not admitted by the adversary—were not Matthew and Luke—Matthew, one of the twelve apostles of our Lord, and Luke, the companion of St. Paul—competent to examine the evidence of the facts which they have recorded? Is it likely that they have recorded

facts upon the credit of a vague report, without examination?—Bishop Horsley.

The Ministry of Fear.

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"—Luke 3:7.

We read that "Noah, moved with fear," built the ark which, in saving him and his family, saved the human race. Fear, dread of impending danger, has its place in the heart of man, and its work in the service of mankind. God made His appeal to it when He dealt with Israel; there was much of it in the Law. It was not absent from the ministry of Jesus Christ; it was He who spoke to men of the "millstone about the neck," of the undying worm, of the doom less tolerable than that of Tyre and Sidon. John's teaching seems to have been composed very largely of this element; he spoke freely of the "wrath to come." We are bound to consider—

I. *The Future Which We Have to Fear.*—We are not to imagine that because those terrible pictures of physical suffering which arose from mistaking the meaning of our Lord's figurative words have long ceased to haunt the minds of men, there is therefore nothing to apprehend in the future. That would be a reaction from one extreme to another. If we take the authority of Scripture as decisive, it is certain that the impenitent have everything to fear. They have to face: 1. *Judgment* and, with judgment, *condemnation*. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Every one shall give account of himself to God." What reason here for keen apprehension on the part of the impenitent sensualist, oppressor, defrauder, scorner! 2. *The penalty* which is due to guilt.

This may be heavier or lighter, according as the light in which a man lived was clearer or less clear; but when we think how sin is branded and smitten *now*, what shame and suffering follow in its train in this world of probation, how seriously Divine wrath visits iniquity even in the day of grace, we may well shrink, with a fear that is not craven but simply wise, from enduring the penalty of unforgiven sin in the world of retribution (Rom. 2:5-9). It is not the brave, but the blind and the infatuated, who are indifferent to "the wrath to come."

II. *Our Common Interest in This Solemn Theme.*—"Who hath warned you," said John, addressing himself (as we learn from Matthew) more particularly to the Pharisees and Saducees, "to flee from the wrath to come? How comes it that you, who are so perfectly satisfied with yourselves and charge yourselves with no defects, are concerned about judgment? And how is it that you Saducees, who profess not to believe in any future at all, are trembling in view of another world?" Why did the rigid formalist and the sceptic come to listen so attentively to his doctrine of repentance? The truth was and is that the supposed sufficiency of Pharisaical proprieties, and the barrier of sceptical denials, break down in the hour when the faithful and fearless prophet speaks, when the stern but friendly truth of God finds its way to the human conscience. Our carefully constructed defenses may last for days, or even years, but they will not last forever; the hour comes when some strong reality sweeps them away. There is not one of us, into how many different classes or denominations we may be divided, who does not need to inquire earnestly of God's spokesman what is the way of escape from the penalty of sin. And we know what is—

III. *The Sure Way of Escape.*—

It is that of *penitence*, on which John so strongly insisted; and of *faith* in that "Lamb of God," whom He pointed out as "taking away the sins of the world."—Henry Cotterill.

Christ's Floor and Fan.

"Whose fan is in his hand."—
Luke 3:17.

I. *The Threshing-Floor* may be properly regarded as the church, into which all professors are gathered; or, even in a wider sense still, it may include all those who, though they have made no public profession of faith in Christ, yet secretly hold some theory of Christianity which they deem sufficient for themselves; or, even a step further, it may and does include those who respect Christ and build their own schemes of salvation. Indeed it includes every man who says, "By this creed, or by this philosophy, or by this life, I will abide the issue of eternity." Thus we see how wide this threshing-floor is, and that in fact, while it is true that Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it, the very salvation that He brings and so freely offers to all condemns and blows away the rejected as chaff.

II. *The Fan in His Hand* may suggest to us the instrument by which he purges his floor, separating the chaff from the wheat.—Christ had no sooner come and entered upon His public ministry than He began to "purge his floor." 1. His Word acts as a fan. Many of the multitudes that followed Jesus took offence at His words. Many who approach the floor of Christ are swept away before they fairly come by His words; one cannot bear salvation by grace, another is blown away by the new birth, another by this and by that doctrine. 2. But there are others who are not blown away by

the Word. When you hear them talk you wonder at their severe and unflinching orthodoxy. For such Christ has another fan. It is one that tests the character: the new birth. Many a chaffy professor of orthodoxy is blown away by this; for even if they do not recognise it themselves, others see how surely they are separated. 3. Still this is brought to another trial. Many say "Oh, yes; I know even the day and the hour of my regeneration." Well! if it is so, the fruits of your new birth will be seen in a new life. Salvation means separation from sin. The demand for a holy life oftentimes proves too much for the chaffy professor who can relate a glowing experience, and he is swept from the floor and heaped up with the rest of the chaff. 4. Again, the Master comes with the fan of affliction, and tries His wheat, as He did Job. There is much meaning in the words, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

III. Thus it is that *This Purging Process* is going on all the time, and constantly we find the chaff blown away.—How many drop out of our churches, and go we know not where! But still much chaff remains among the wheat, and doubtless will remain until He come again, and then the floor will be thoroughly purged; the hail of that day will sweep away every refuge of lies, every hypocrite's cloak will be rent off, every self-deceived one will be undeceived, and the sheep shall be separated from the goats, the chaff from the wheat. "The wheat will he gather into his garner," etc. Who shall abide the day of His coming?—G. F. Pentecost

The Holy Spirit Descending Like a Dove.

"And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him."
—Luke 3:22.

I. First, as the brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep produced order and life in the beginning, so does He impart new life to the soul, and open the eyes of the understanding, that we may behold the wonders of God's law.

II. Again: In the fact that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Lord Jesus in the form of a dove, we are reminded that quietness is often essential to many of the operations of grace. "A very restless person will never be very godly, and a very godly one will never be very restless. 'Be still, and know that I am God.'"

III. Another point suggested by the text is, that as the dove is an appropriate emblem of love, so the soul which is influenced by the blessed Spirit will abound in love to God, and love to His people. The steeple of an old village church was to be pulled down, in order to prepare the way for some modern improvements, and a long rope was fastened near the top of it, that it might be kept from crushing the building in its fall. Soon everything was ready, and the master-carpenter shouted aloud to the men to pull. As the old steeple began to tremble, and sway from side to side, a beautiful white dove was observed to fly round and round, not daring to go in at its accustomed place, and yet evidently unwilling to depart. She seemed to be aware that a great calamity was about to happen, while a hundred voices shouted, "See that dove!" "Poor thing!" the head carpenter observed, "she must have young ones up in the steeple." Again the workmen gave a vigorous tug at the rope, and the old steeple reeled and tottered. The distress of the poor dove became so great, that every one felt sorry for her, and not a word was spoken. The bird hovered a moment on her wings, and at the instant that the creaking timbers began to topple over, she darted into the steeple and was hid from view. When

the rubbish was cleared away, she was found lying between her two young ones—all three crushed to death! The devoted bird was willing to die with and for them, but she could not save them. There was a spectacle of devoted love—love even unto death!

IV. I remark, in the fourth place, that the descent of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, should remind us that gentleness is a distinguishing mark of Christian character in which most of us have very much to learn. Audubon, the ornithologist, relates this incident in his autobiography: "A man, who was once a pirate, assured me that several times, while at certain wells dug in the burning, shelly sands, the soft and melancholy notes of the doves awoke in his heart feelings which had long slumbered, melting his heart to repentance. So deeply was he moved by them—the only soothing sounds he had ever heard during his life of horrors—that through them he was induced to escape from his vessel, abandon his turbulent companions, and return to a family deplored his absence, and he now lives in peace in the midst of his friends." "I beseech you by the gentleness of Christ," was St. Paul's exhortation to the Christians of Corinth (2 Cor. 10:1); and "Gentleness," he assures the Galatians (5:22), is one of the prominent fruits of the Spirit. Henry Martyn, whose temper was naturally not the gentlest, wrote in his journal, "I walked into the village where the boat stopped for the night, and found the worshippers of Cali by the sound of their drums and cymbals. I did not speak to them on account of their being Bangalees; but being invited to walk in by the Brahmins, I went within the railings, and asked a few questions about the idol. The Brahmin, who spoke bad Hindooostanee, disputed with great heat, and his tongue ran faster than I could follow, and the people shouted applause. I continued

to ask my questions, without making any remarks upon the answers. . . . The man grew quite mild, and said it was "good words," and asked me seriously, at last, was idol-worship true or false? I felt it a matter of thankfulness that I could make known the truth of God, though but a stammerer; and this I also learned, that the power of gentleness is irresistible. Once more: the dove has always been the type of purity, and the Holy Spirit is the purifier of the heart. When He gains an entrance into it, sin and uncleanness must depart.—J. N. Norton.

The Devil's Preface.

"If thou be the Son of God."—Luke 4:3.

Satan knows how to write prefaces: here is one. He began the whole series of his temptations by a doubt cast upon our Lord's Sonship, and a crafty quotation from Scripture. He caught up the echo of the Father's word at our Lord's baptism, and began tempting where heavenly witness ended. He knew how to discharge a double-shotted temptation, and at once to suggest doubt and rebellion—"If" . . . "command."

I. *The Tempter Assails With an "If."*—1. Not with point-blank denial. That would be too startling. Doubt serves the Satanic purpose better than heresy. 2. He grafts his "if" on a holy thing. He makes the doubt look like holy anxiety concerning Divine Sonship. 3. He "ifs" a plain Scripture. "Thou art my Son" (Psa. 2:7). 4. He "ifs" a former manifestation. At His baptism God said, "This is my beloved Son." Satan contradicts our spiritual experience. 5. He "ifs" a whole life. From the first Jesus had been about His Father's business; yet after thirty years His Sonship is questioned. 6.

He "ifs" inner consciousness. Our Lord knew that He was the Father's Son; but the evil one is daring. 7. He "ifs" a perfect character. Well may he question us, whose faults are so many.

II. *The Tempter Aims the "If" at a Vital Part.*—1. At our sonship. In our Lord's case he attacks His human and Divine Sonship. In our case he would make us doubt our regeneration. 2. At our childlike spirit. He tempts us to cater for ourselves. 3. At our Father's honour. He tempts us to doubt our Father's providence, and to blame Him for letting us hunger. 4. At our comfort and strength as members of the heavenly family.

III. *The Tempter Supports That "If" With Circumstances.*—1. You are alone. Would a father desert his child? 2. You are in a desert. Is this the place for God's Heir? 3. You are with the wild beasts. Wretched company for a Son of God! 4. You are an hungered. How can a loving Father let His perfect Son hunger? Put all these together, and the tempter's question comes home with awful force to one who is hungry and alone. When we see others thus tried, do we think them brethren? Do we not question their sonship, as Job's friends questioned him? What wonder if we question ourselves!

IV. *When Overcome, the Tempter's "If" Is Helpful.*—1. As coming from Satan, it is a certificate of our true descent. (1) He only questions truth: therefore we are true sons. (2) He only leads sons to doubt their sonship; therefore we are sons. 2. As overcome, it may be a quietus to the enemy for years. It takes the sting out of man's questionings and suspicions; for if we have answered the devil himself we do not fear men. 3. As past, it is usually the prelude to angels coming and ministering to us.—C. H. Spurgeon.

The Blessedness of Humility.

"Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God."—Luke 6:20.

Acting on the established and valid principle that we must interpret the less by the more complete, we determine the meaning of this passage by the words as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," etc.; and thus taking it, we conclude—

I. *That Narrowness of Means Is Not a Desirable Thing.*—Our Lord could not have intended to teach that the poor (in outward circumstances) were necessarily blessed, for poverty itself means privation, inability to command the various bounties and treasures our Creator has provided for our enjoyment and enrichment. Moreover, it by no means constantly or certainly leads to anything which can be called "the kingdom of God"; on the contrary, it frequently leads to dishonesty, servility, demoralisation (Prov. 30:8, 9). Neither, therefore, in the present nor in the future can such poverty be pronounced blessed (see, however, homily on ch. 4:18, "to preach the gospel to the poor").

II. *That Poor-Spiritedness Is a Decidedly Unworthy Thing.*—A "poor-spirited" man, according to the common usage of the term, is a man no one can esteem, and he is a man who cannot respect himself. Christ could not have intended to commend him as the heir of the kingdom of God. He did indeed say much in praise of the meek, the enduring, the merciful, the forgiving; he did say much in depreciation of violence and retaliation. But meekness is a vastly different thing from meanness or cowardice; and a man may be nobly superior to mere violence who fights bravest battles for truth and righteousness. All struggle is not soldiership; and he who has most of what Christ meant when He blessed the

poor in spirit may be very valiant and very aggressive at his post as the champion of all that is true and pure.

III. *That Humility of Heart Is the Desirable Thing for Sinful Men.*—

Blessed are the men who have in their hearts a deep sense of their own unworthiness. And they are so because this is: 1. The true and therefore the right thing. Truth is always and under all circumstances to be preferred to error. It would make a man much more comfortable in his mind to persuade him that he is everything that is good, and that he had done everything that was required of him. But what a hollow and rotten thing such a satisfaction would be, if the man were wrong and guilty! How much better for him to know that he was guilty, in need of cleansing and of mercy! How pitiable (not enviable) the Church or the nation that supposes itself to be rich and strong when it is utterly poor and weak! How enviable (not pitiable) the man who has come to understand that he is in urgent need of those resources which he may have if he will seek them, and which—now that he knows his necessity—he will not fail to seek! To have a deep sense of our unworthiness before God is to know ourselves as we are; it is to recognise our lives as they have been. It is to perceive how far we have failed to be that which we should have been to our Divine Father; it is to realise how much there has been in our lives which God's Law condemns, how much there has been absent from them which His Word demands. It is to hold the truth in our hearts; it is, so far, to be in the right. It is a blessed estate as compared with its opposite—that of error and delusion. But it is also: 2. The receptive and therefore the hopeful thing. When a man imagines himself to be safe he admits no Saviour to his heart; when he knows and feels himself to be in danger and in difficulty he opens his

door wide to one that will befriend him. The man in whose heart is a true humility, who finds himself to be wrong with God, who sees how far he is from perfect rectitude, is the very man who will welcome Jesus Christ in all his gracious offices. (1) Conscious ignorance will welcome the Divine Teacher. (2) Conscious guilt will rejoice in an all-sufficient Saviour. (3) Conscious weakness will lean on Almighty Power, and be ever seeking the upholding grace of a mighty Spirit. (4) Conscious error and insufficiency will yield itself to the guidance and direction of a Divine Lord and Leader. And surrendering ourselves to Christ, we enter the kingdom of God.—Henry Cotterill.

Mercy.

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."—Luke 6: 36.

I. *Two Thoughts.*—In these words our Lord sets before us two thoughts:

1. The pattern of mercy, of justice, of forbearance, and forgiveness; of generosity, which we ought to follow, which is the example of "The Highest" whose children we are called—"Be ye therefore merciful." And—

2. The rule of God's judgment in matters between man and man—"With that same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Thus, we see that, for the present, God is to us all, even to the unthankful and evil, what He would have us also to be. He is merciful, gracious; He spares, He condemns not, He forgives, He gives to us all "good measure." But between that life and this other comes the Day of Judgment, when we must give an account of the things done in the body, and of this Judgment this is one of the great rules: with what measure men have measured to others, it shall

be measured to them again. Mercy will follow mercy, and he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy. By the rule by which we have judged and condemned shall we, in our turn, be tried. There can be no looking for forgiveness, if forgiveness has on our part been denied. God's great rule of judgment and recompense answers to the second of the two great commandments—that we should do to all men as we would they should do to us; as we have done to others, so, in the end, shall it be done to us; in all things as we sow, so shall we reap. And so also in our behaviour to others, in our treatment of them, in our judgment and words about them—we must expect nothing more from our Great Judge than what we have been willing to give to them. Thus, we are now choosing the rule by which we shall be dealt with by-and-by.

II. *God's Rule in Judgment.*— "With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Those words must surely seem to us some of the most awful words in the Bible, for—

1. They are so plainly the words of that justice which all men acknowledge, that we not only believe, but feel, that they must be true. If we believe in a Judgment at all, then we must look to be dealt with in the same spirit, by the same measures, according to the truth and generosity which we have shown, when it was our turn to show mercy, to pass opinion, to help and share and give. Can any imagine that they may deal with men harshly, but that God ought to deal with themselves tenderly? This then is one thing that makes these words so awful, that we see for ourselves that it must be as they say. The other is that, while we feel the certainty of the law—

2. We cannot see how it will be carried out. It lies in the awful darkness of the time to come. All we

know is that, some time or other, a man's deeds will be returned upon him, and he will find out what God his Maker and Judge thought of his dealings with his brethren by what happens to himself.

III. Man's Unreasonable Judgment.—We must all judge often, and sometimes condemn. The sin is not in judging and condemning, but in doing so without reason—carelessly, unjustly—for the sake of condemning, condemning without mercy and without fear. In this case the same harsh and unsparing judgment awaits ourselves. Dare any one look back into his past and venture to say that he could endure the judgment, if, in God's justice, what he measured to others was to be exactly measured to him again? Yet that is God's rule. Can we hear of it and not tremble?

If there were nothing else to drive us to take refuge in God's offers of mercy in Christ, surely this alone would be enough. There is nothing but true repentance to save us from being dealt with exactly by the same measure which we have dealt to others.

God repays to men what they do. He measures back, and judges them by the standard they apply to their brethren.—R. W. Church.

Christ Warns Us Against Judging.

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged."—Luke 6: 37.

I. What Is Here Forbidden.—It is plain that the thing forbidden is not the office, or the upright discharge of the office, of a magistrate or a judge. When provision is made, in a Christian town or state, for the due punishment of offenders against the tranquillity of our streets or the security of our homes, there is nothing in this contrary to the will or precept of

Christ. He was Himself a respecter of civil order, and of the authority by which it is maintained. Only let the heart of the judge, in the exercise of his office, be full of humility and of compassion; only let him remember that common infirmity, that universal sinfulness, in which he himself is the fellow and the brother of him who stands at his bar for judgment; only let him acknowledge with becoming thankfulness that Divine goodness, of grace and of providence, which alone has made him to differ; and his administration of justice may be the offspring of a Christian devotion, the exercise of a calling in which he was called, of a ministry acceptable and well-pleasing to God. 2. Nor do we understand Him to blame the expression in common society of a righteous displeasure against deeds and against doers of iniquity. It is no charity to call evil good, or to refrain, out of a misplaced tenderness, from calling evil evil. Only let us remember what we ourselves are, and where—sinners living amid temptations; and let us, therefore, speak in humility, in sincerity, and in truth. 3. Yet the world is full of such judgments as are here forbidden. (1) How little of our conversation upon the faults of others is in any sense necessary! Our judgments are most often gratuitous, willing, wanton judgments; passed in idleness and unconcern; prompted by no feeling of duty; far, far worse, therefore, than any dulness, than any silence. (2) And, if needless, then uncharitable, too. How full of suspicion! How unwilling to allow a merit not patent! How ready to imagine a bad motive, where, by the nature of the case (man being the judge), we cannot see nor know it! (3) And how many of them are false judgments! (4) Inconsistent and hypocritical. It is always the sinner who suspects sin. It is the practised deceiver who imagines and imputes deceit. There is

no real abhorrence of evil where there is a readiness to declaim against it.

II. Why It Is Forbidden.—1. There is a retaliation in such things. A law of retribution. The censorious man will have his censor, whereas the merciful man will be mercifully judged—both here and hereafter. Not that a mere abstinence from censorious judgment will purchase for a sinner exemption from the sentence due to his own sins; but this we may say, that a merciful spirit in judging others will both be regarded as an indication of good in the man otherwise not blameless, and will save him from that aggravation of guilt which belongs to him who has both sinned and judged. 2. Such judgment as is here forbidden is an invasion of God's peculiar office (Rom. 12: 19). 3. To judge is to betray in ourselves a root of self-ignorance, self-complacency, and self-righteousness. No man could thus judge, who really felt himself to be a sinner. 4. As the root of this unchristian judgment is in self-ignorance, so the fruit of it is definite injury to the cause of the Gospel, to the soul of our neighbour, and, most of all, to our own. Who can love so unlovely a Christianity? Who is not disgusted and alienated by that religion which clothes itself in a garb so odious. 5. The whole spirit of the self-constituted judge is, in reality, a spirit of hypocrisy. When he professes to be distressed by the fault of his brother, he has, in truth, within him a tenfold greater fault of his own. He knows not his own weakness; he offers a strength which he has not. He cares not for the cure; he cares only for the distinction, for the superiority, of the healer.

Conclusion: No man is fit, in his own strength, to be the counsellor or the guide of man. Every man has his own faults and his own sins; and it is only self-ignorance which makes him overlook them. If any man undertakes to judge another, he thereby

judges himself. Let a man first look into himself, try and examine himself as in the sight of God, drag his own transgressions to the light of God's judgment, and pass sentence with an unsparing strictness upon his own omissions of duty and commissions of sin.—Dean Vaughan.

Penitence.

"Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." —Luke 7: 47.

I. Is Penitence Unreal? When we look at it, and ask on what true penitence is founded, we find that so far from it being connected with unreality, the whole object of penitence is to grasp facts. The man who thinks that his life is perfectly smooth, perfectly complete, the man who thinks that his faults are nothing, he himself is living under the most utter delusion in which a man can live. Penitence is founded on reality.

II. Is It Necessary? And there comes back in answer to that question the voice of every spiritual teacher who has ever taught the world. "Repent," says John the Baptist, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Repent," says Jesus Christ; "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins," echo the Apostles.

III. If Penitence Is Necessary, and Penitence Is Real, Is It True That Penitence Is Morbid? It is not penitence that creates depression. Want of faith, want of courage, anything you will, but not penitence. Penitence is like a narrow valley that leads the way up to sunlit heights; penitence is the valley of Achor, but it is also the door of hope. Happy is the man —this is the experience of the ages—

whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is pardoned. Miserable is the man whose iniquity is not forgiven because it is unconfessed, and whose sins still cry to heaven.

IV. What, Then—That Comes to Be the Question—Are We to Do, if Penitence is a Constituent Part of the Christian Character?

1. And the first thing is to get alone by ourselves and ask two questions: First, What do I think of God? And, secondly—still more awful question—What does God think of me?

2. At the foot of the Cross I must confess my sin to God.

3. I must do it with restitution and amendment.

4. Then, having confessed with restitution and amendment, go back a forgiven sinner, with the image of Jesus Christ crucified in your heart.—Bishop Winnington-Ingram.

Waiting for Christ.

"They were all waiting for him."
—Luke 8:40.

Why did they not go on? There were plenty of them, a hundred men or a thousand; why did they wait for another man? We pay unconscious tributes to the Son of God. To be waited for is a creed, a faith, an uprising and an outgoing of the soul, a testimony rich as blood, quivering and tender as anxious love. "They were all waiting for him." He was but one, why wait? why not proceed? We know why; the heart always knows why. There is a great gathering in the church, and every attendant has flowers in her hand or his hand; there is a light on every face, there is a subtle joy thrilling the air: why do these people wait? why does the priest tarry? why do all the attendants look at one another? Because the bride has not yet arrived.

What, waiting for one woman? Ay! If thou, poor fool, couldst read life aright, that is life—waiting for one, the other one, the completing one, the vital one. I was sitting in a great hall thronged with some five thousand enthusiasts: why did we not go on? Because he had not yet come. Sitting immediately in front of me was Henry Rogers, the famous Edinburgh reviewer, and a great critic and philosopher; and turning round, he said, "Now we are all ready for the great man." Rogers himself was immeasurably the greatest man in that assembly, but he, too, was waiting, and presently the whole air rent with a thrilling cheer, a noise of gladness, for John Bright came up the platform stairs and passed to the chairman's side. Now! Why not an hour ago? The magnetic presence was wanting, and the magnetic touch was waited for; no other man could take up just the position which that man was about to assume; when he came, beat the drum, wave the red banner, for the man for whom we have been waiting is face to face with us, and we shall catch his solemn music in a moment. They all waited for Christ.

I. *"They Were All Waiting for Him."* So shall it be one day with the whole earth. The earth has always been waiting for some one, not knowing the name, and being quite unable to give expression to its own aspirations and mystic desires. What makes you uneasy to-day? Because he has not come. Who has not come? I do not know, but the mysterious pronoun, the being that is always alluded to rather than specifically indicated. A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you. Has He not sent one? He has sent a hundred, but not the one. We are thankful for Moses and the prophets and the great singing ones, the minstrels of Israel, but I am expecting another one that shall gather them all up into a personality more majestic than any one of them.

selves could sustain. Are you sure He is coming? Certainly. What makes you so certain? My soul. There is an aching heart that means to prophesy, there is a broken sob that is a fragment of a song; and we know, without being able to tell psychologically and literally why, that there is another coming, always coming, must come; the circle is nearly complete, one more turning of the compasses, and it will be beautiful as the circle of a completed desire and completed love.

II. There Has Always Been a Great Expectation of Another Coming One, some one who can interpret the waiting of the world; some man of rare genius who understands what it is the poor dumb world wants, and is looking about for and is quite sure will come, but does not know when he will come; he may come now, or as a thief in the night, or like a flash of lightning, or like an unforetold impression upon the soul. The isles shall wait for his law. There is not a soul that is fully satisfied, but it is to be satisfied to-morrow; it may be satisfied in the dawn, or it may have to wait until sultry midday, or it may be taxed in patience until the gathering shades of the sunset, but to-morrow, throbbing, coming, pledged, if God so will. There is a great cry going up from the broken-hearted and disappointed world, saying, Who will show us any good?

III. The Congregation That Waits for Christ Is Never Disappointed; the congregation that waits for anyone but Christ ought never to be gratified. If we wait for Christ, He will come to us; for He knows that we are waiting for Him, and He knows everything, He never breaks His word. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." He is there before they are; He only waits to be manifested, revealed, and set in concrete and unmistakable figure and

emphasis; He is there all the time. Said John the Baptist, "There standeth one among you whom you know not; He it is." The people had been looking to the horizon when they should have been looking at the man who was standing next to them. God is nearer than we often suppose, and His satisfactions are prepared before our desires are formulated.—Joseph Parker.

Christ Welcoming Seekers.

"*He received them.*"—Luke 9:11.

In the Revised Version we read, "*He welcomed them,*" in place of "*He received them.*" An instructive improvement, of which we may make evangelical use.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon the fact that Jesus welcomed those who sought Him. 1. We observe, first, that our Lord received all comers at all times. The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for His disciples, who were weary after their labours. A great sorrow was on them also, for John had been beheaded, and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity; for Herod was inquiring for Him. It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should welcome the insatiable throng? I think, too, that the Master desired just then to hold a conference with His apostles as to the work they had done, and the future which was opening up before them. 2. Our Lord received all sorts of comers. They were a motley throng, and I fear that few, if any, of them were actuated by any high or exalted motive. He never rejected any be-

cause they were (1) poor; (2) diseased; (3) too young; (4) too old. 3. Once more: our Lord receives all with a hearty welcome. He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence; but "He welcomed them."

II. Now I come to use this as *an Encouragement*. If Jesus Christ when He was here on earth welcomed all that came at all hours, then He will welcome you, my friend, if you come to Him now; for the circumstances are just the same. 1. You are the same sort of person as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good-for-nothing bodies; they were persons that were full of need, and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase His favour. Are you not just like them? 2. And then there is the same Saviour. Jesus Christ is the same gracious Pardoner as He was in the days of His flesh.

III. Thirdly, we use our text as *A Lesson*. If Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to Him, let all of us who are His followers imitate His example, and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord. Men are brought to Jesus by cheerfulness far sooner than by gloom. Jesus welcomed men. His looks said, "I am glad to see you." In winning souls use an abundance of smiles. Have you not seen in one of our magazines an account of seven people saved by a smile? It is a pretty story. A clergyman passes by a window on his way to church. A baby was being dandled there, and he smiled at the baby, and the baby at him. Another time he passed; the baby was there again, and once more he smiled. Soon baby was taken to the window at the hour when he usually passed. They did not know who the gentleman was; but one day two of the older children followed to see where he went on a Sunday. They followed him to church, and as he preached in a winning way, they told their father and

mother, who felt interest enough in their baby's friend to wish to go. Thus in a short time a godless family that had previously neglected the worship of God was brought to the Saviour because the minister smiled at the baby. I never heard of anybody getting to heaven through frowning at the baby, or at any one else. Certain wonderfully good persons go through the world as if they were commissioned to impress everybody with the awful solemnity of religion: they resemble a winter's night without a moon; nobody seems attracted, nor even impressed, by them except in the direction of dislike. I saw a life-buoy the other day covered with luminous paint. How bright it seemed, how suitable to be cast upon the dark sea to help a drowning man! An ordinary life-buoy he would never see, but this is so bright and luminous that a man must see it. Give me a soul-winner bright with holy joy, for he will be seen by the sorrowing soul, and his help will be accepted.—C. H. Spurgeon.

Morality and Religion.

"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."—Luke 10:27.

You will observe there are several "ands" in the passage, and that all the earlier ones, though very useful, are merely additions; but here ("and thy neighbour") is an equalising copulative, a word which will not permit you to take the first part of the sentence as the declaration of the Saviour, but which requires you to take it in its wholeness. It is not enough to "love the Lord thy God," nor is it enough to "love thy neighbour as thyself," you must do both; and there-

fore that "and" stands as none of the others do, and as almost no other such single common word does in the great realm of literature. The love of God is put first in order, probably from the dignity of the personage spoken of; it is in the order of importance, but not of time. We do not first love the Lord our God with all our heart, and then learn to love our neighbour as ourselves. We learn to love our neighbour, and from that point, through practice, we come to a condition in which we love our God. So then, these two members or sides of this wonderful sentence, this charter of human life, may be said to represent religion and morality. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"—that is, thou shalt worship Him, reverence Him, acknowledge Him, and look up to Him, in every inflection of experience—this stands appropriately for religion; and the other—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—stands appropriately and properly for morality.

I. *What, Then, Is the Sphere and Function of Morality;* its educating force; its final intent? Morality includes—1. Duties to oneself, personal duties, sustenance, defence. 2. Social duties—the duties of the family and the neighbourhood. 3. The relations in which we stand to the larger community represented by the Government in all its forms. Here, then, I pause in the discussion, having shown in the first place what moralities are—namely, that they are in their highest and best sense, those duties which men owe to themselves, to their households, to civil society, to their social relations in this world and in time; and also, that morality, in one form and at each stage, prepares for the next higher development of it and the next advance in growth; and likewise, interiorly, that every true morality tends to develop itself in a higher class of faculties. So that, finally—

II. *Every Morality That Does Not Go On to a Spiritual Form Is Stopped and Dwarfed.*—Men say, "I am not a religious man, but still I do about as well as I know how." Is that rational? What would you say of men who should voyage to a distant country, and make only those provisions which were necessary for them while they stayed at home? Death cuts men in two, and leaves the bottom here, and there is no top to go there. Do not understand me as saying that morality is of no use. It is very useful; it is the seed-ground of immortality; and I go further and say, it is better that you should have that, even if you have no religion, than that you should have no religion and not that either. Therefore when I preach that you must be born again, when I preach that the new life in Christ Jesus, wrought by the power of God, must be in you, do not think that I undervalue the lower forms by which you come to the possibility of these things. They are of transcendent importance, but do not believe that they are enough. Straw that never ripens its grain is straw, plants that throw out leaves and do not blossom are mere grass and herbs and not flowers. Trees and vines that bring forth no fruit are not fruit vines, nor fruit trees.—H. W. Beecher.

The Law of Prayer.

"Ask, and it shall be given you."—
Luke 11:9.

This familiar text is usually quoted, and rightly so, as being one of the most precious promises and encouragements to prayer which the Bible contains; but if you look at the text, it is far more than a promise encouraging prayer. It is a declaration of the condition of our receiving any good gift from God. For reasons which may not be fully intelligible to

us, God has limited His mercy. There is the treasure-house full of grace. You go up to it; the doors are locked. You must knock, or they will not be opened. There is the river of life open to all, but you may die from thirst on its banks unless you kneel. Ask, says Christ, then you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. This is really the final mystery of prayer. Why do we need to pray at all? Can love that waits to be asked be perfect love? And the mystery is deepened when you remember the very people that need God's grace most are those that never ask for it—wicked people, indifferent people, immoral people, unbelieving people, Godless people. They are the people that need the grace, and they will not ask for it. And yet God says, "No grace unless it be sought." Ye have not—why? Not because you do not need it. Ye have not, because ye ask not. That, I repeat, is the great mystery of prayer.

I. I do not pretend to be able to offer you any full explanation of the mystery, but there are three *considerations which help to alleviate the difficulty a little*.—1. First of all, it is clear that prayer recognises the sovereign freedom of the human will. Oh! it is an awful thing, that human freedom of ours! Why, my brethren, God lifts His little finger, and the stoutest heart would open its door. But if God entered a heart against its will, He would not enter a heart: He would enter a ruin. And to make prayer a condition of God's gift recognises even in man's deepest sin the noble freedom of the human will. 2. Then, again, prayer at least implies some sympathy of the will of him who prays with God. You know that there are cables beneath the Atlantic. Now and then you read in the papers that interruption has taken place in the cable. No messages pass, and the cause of the interruption is some

defect in the conveying power in the wire; some fault, as the electricians call it, in the cable itself. Well, now, just so there may be moral faults in the will which may make it impossible for God to give unless we are in sympathy with Him; and to make prayer, therefore, the condition of God's gift is to imply inward sympathy of will with God. 3. And then, last of all, you cannot doubt—and I shall speak of that in a moment more fully—that whether we can understand the mystery of prayer or not, there is something in prayer, altogether apart from the answers which God gives to it, which justifies prayer. A great thinker once said: "I have conquered all my doubts, not with my books, but on my knees." "On my knees"; ah, yes! And I have sometimes thought that if those golden gates of heaven were never opened for any answer to prayer to pass through, prayer would be enough by itself. There is something in the reflex attitude and influence and effect of prayer which makes prayer in itself a blessing. Ask, and the very asking is a grace. Seek, and before the answer comes you have found something worth finding. Knock, and that very knock is a blessing. But whether we can understand it or not, this is the law; I could almost put the law of prayer into a single sentence to which there is no exception—much prayer, much blessing; little prayer, little blessing; no prayer, no blessing.

II. Now, let me turn to the brighter side of this text, and ask you to consider for a few moments some of the *Blessings Which Come to Those Who Obey This Great Law of the Kingdom*.—Let me encourage you to pray by these blessings. 1. First of all, I cannot find a word, though I have tried hard, to exactly express what I mean when I say that the first blessing of prayer is this: the unconscious check it imposes on the life.

Any of you who spend half an hour every morning with God will know what I mean. You weave about your life a network of self-restraint never seen, most potent, most real, most felt when most needed. St. Paul had a word, a favourite word; and St. Paul was a very passionate man, a fiery man; but there was a very favourite word with him; it is translated most inadequately in our version, "moderation." The Greek word means "high mastery of self"; and that is what prayer gives a man. 2. The other day I was reading an article by one of our scientific men who has given up all belief in the supernatural in any answers to prayer, and yet he said these words: "If any one abandons prayer, he abandons one of the highest forces which mould and benefit human character," I do not wonder at it. You could not go into the presence of God, if God never answered prayer, without receiving a blessing. When Moses was on the Mount, we read that he came down from it, and his face shone, though he wist it not. There are shining faces in the streets of London to-day, if you have eyes to see them—men, women, not beautiful by nature, but beautiful by what is more than nature, beautiful with God's own beauty. You look at them, and you think of the words in Tennyson's "In Memoriam":

"Her eyes were hymns of silent prayer."

You look at them, and you think of those better words, "They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. 3. And yet the reflex blessing of prayer is as nothing, absolutely nothing, compared with its chief blessing—and with that I wish to close—that prayer has power with God. I do not shrink from the words. The prophet Hosea, describing that night of wrestling of Jacob with God,

uses these words—you will find them in the Revised Version—"In his manhood he had power with God." Do you know what that power was? It was the power of a lame man wrestling in prayer—"I will not let Thee go until thou bless me." It was the power that every soul in prayer has with God to-day.—G. S. Barrett.

Power of Satan Over Men.

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."—Luke 11:21.

Christ employs this sentence in speaking of the devil's influence over men, and whilst we remember that it is figurative, we must give to the figure more than ordinary significance, for it is a figure of the Great Teacher whose every word was weighted with truth. Concerning then the devil's power over men, this figure reminds us—

I. *It Is the Power of a Strong Being.* Our own experiences and the history of the world would lead us to believe this; but our proofs now shall be drawn from the Bible. First: The names by which the Bible designates him. Almost every such title has reference to his power, Apollyon, Beelzebub, Prince of this world, Prince of the power of the air, God of this world. And the creatures that the Scriptures use as emblematical of him are the strongest. The serpent, whose mortal fang stings, and whose awful coil crushes to death; the roaring lion, the king of the beasts of the forest; the old dragon, which was to eastern minds an incarnation of almost resistless power. Secondly: The work that the Bible attributes to him. He introduced sin into this world, and is the arch rebel in God's kingdom; he is the leader of the legions of sin in earth and in hell; he "leads the world captive at

his will;" he is so mighty, that in the encounter with him even the youths faint and are weary, and the young men utterly fall; so mighty, that to obtain the victory over him the Son of God becomes incarnate and dies; so mighty, that though he is finally bruised in the head, he bruises the heel of the Son of Man.

II. *It Is the Power of a Strong Being, Armed.* The strength of the great enemy is not cumbersome, unwieldy power. He uses "wiles," "depths," "darts," "snares," "all deceivableness of unrighteousness." He suits himself to those with whom he has to do—arms himself with weapons to which his victims are vulnerable. His weapons are too numerous for description, or even enumeration. The arts, the sciences, the literature, nay, even the affections of men he transforms into weapons wherewith he girds himself and assails our souls. This makes him far more formidable than his mere strength or power.

III. *It Is Power over a Very Precious Possession.* When he obtains the power he is ever seeking over men, he has power over "a palace." Every man is a palace. Look at his body, whether that body be of the ebony of Africa, or the fairer hues of temperate climes, it is a palace "fearfully and wonderfully made," a palace whose "builder and maker is God." Where, even in classic lands and ages, can any palace be found having such exquisite contrivances as the eye and ear of man, or possessing the beauty and symmetry of the human form. Look at his mental and moral nature, and see in the palace such "goods" as palace walls have never contained. What jewels, what regalia, costly and royal, are the memory, the imagination, the reason, the affections. Within us are "goods" of a world rather than of a palace. It is over this "palace," the body, and over these "goods," the mental and moral nature of man, that Satan

seeks to obtain power. Sin abuses and degrades the body. The feet, the hands, the eyes, are they not often all employed in the service of sin? And Satan is not content with mere outward service, although he tempts the formalist and the hypocrite to believe that God will be. He lays his loathsome hand on every power of our spirit, every possession of our soul.

IV. *It Is Often the Complete Power of a Strong Being, Armed.* Of this complete power of Satan over man, Christ speaks when he says the "goods are kept in peace." There is a conqueror having obtained so perfect a victory, that he holds his possessions in peace. So it literally is with the devil's power over some men. He gradually extends over them his power, overcoming first in one temptation, and then in another, till the flag of rebellion against God waves from the turret, and the heraldry of hell is emblazoned on the walls of this "palace." So with the countenance of the drunkard, debauchee, and I think also of the wilful sceptic. There are mentioned in the Scriptures two stages through which evil men pass. In the first, they are "servants of Satan," because of the strivings of their conscience, and of God's Spirit, they find some of the commands of sin to be irksome and painful. They are servants, working for wages. Sinning not for the love of sin, but for what they can get from it. Then there are those who become "children" of Satan. Christ calls them the "children of hell." They then anticipate sin, they glory in their shame. Without any sense of compulsion they perform Satan's horrid will. Like a young convict of whom we read, who after a series of precocious crimes that had brought him at the dawn of manhood to the penal cell, and who sat there, not disconsolate and heart-broken, as a man in such circumstances might well be,

but with diligent toil rubbing the chains that bound his limbs; his eyes looking with delight in their silver-like sheen. So do some men rejoice in their iniquity. Such is the peace of the man over whom Satan has completely triumphed. It is the peace of an iron slavery—the peace of a fatal slumber—the peace of death. Better far all the horrors of the bloodiest war. In view, then, of such considerations we say, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." "Put on the whole armour of God," etc.—Urijah Thomas.

On Relapsing Into Sin.

"The last state of that man is worse than the first."—Luke 11:26.

I. *Relapsing into Sin Is the Greatest Ingratitude.*—1. It is the work of grace only, if our Lord, after we have committed a sin, receives us back into His house. 2. What should you say of the prodigal son if, shortly after the banquet, he had left his father's house again, thrown away the ring and shoes, and trodden under foot the best robe: if he had abused the presents of his father by new offences? 3. As the physician is filled with scorn of a sick person, whom he had healed with great care, and who by disobedience had plunged himself into peril of death again: so the Heavenly Physician will depart from a soul which repeatedly commits the same sins again.

II. *Relapsing into Sin Is the Greatest Folly.*—1. Sin is like a disease which becomes more perilous by repeated attacks. 2. In proportion as the power of sin increases, the strength of man's will decreases. 3. The time for conversion is getting shorter and shorter.

III. *Relapse Is the Forerunner of Eternal Perdition.*—Conversion depends partly on the good-will of the

sinner, and partly on the grace of God. We have seen that the strength of will relaxes with every fresh sin, and therefore the relapsed cannot rely on it. And the greatest energy alone cannot perform the work of conversion. Without a full measure of grace the conversion of the relapsed is impossible. 1. It is to be feared that the ordinary graces will produce no effect upon him. God by His grace shows to the sinner the deformity of sin; terrifies him by its consequences and punishment, and endeavours to gain his affections by pointing out to him the infiniteness of the Divine charity. But if the man continually relapses into his old sins, are these motives likely to make a lasting impression on him? 2. Or, are we entitled to expect from God extraordinary graces for the relapsing sinner? Should God show greater mercy towards us, because we have been so ungrateful to Him? When we continually tear open old wounds, think you the Heavenly Physician of our souls will prepare us a stronger remedy?—Bishop Ehrler.

Hypocrisy.

"The leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."—Luke 12:1.

I. *The Hypocrite's Character.*—1. A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, "They say and they do not." Talk is easy, but walk is hard; speech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy; but lip-piety needs no grace. 2. The next mark of a hypocrite is, that whenever he does right it is that he may be seen of men. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice; he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon

her, and then she is something indeed. The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night; but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men. 3. Hypocrites love titles, and honours, and respect from men. There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things. 4. These people neglected all the inward part of religion, and only observed the outward. As our Saviour said, they "made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess." There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them; and there are many persons that have a very fine spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart. 5. You may know a hypocrite by another sign. His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day. He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour; for he is, as the boy said, "saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half hour, for there is family prayer; but when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him. If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him, too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in. 6. There is another sign of the hypocrite, and now the lash will fall on my own back, and on most of us too. Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others, and very lenient with themselves. Have you ever heard a hypo-

crite describe himself? I describe him thus—"You are a mean, beggarly fellow." "No," says he, "I am not; I am economical." I say to him, "You are dishonest, you are a thief." "No," says he, "I am only cute and sharp for the times." "Well, but," I say to him, "you are proud and conceited." "Oh!" says he, "I have only a proper and manly respect." "Ay, but you are a fawning, cringing fellow." "No," says he, "I am all things to all men." Somehow or other he will make vice look like a virtue in himself, but he will deal by the reverse rule with others. Show him a Christian who is really humble, and he says, "I hate his fawning ways." Tell him there is one who is very courageous for Christ. "Oh! he is impudent," says he. Show him one who is liberal, doing what he can for his Master's service, spending, and being spent for Him. "Rash and imprudent," says he, "extravagant; the man does not know what he is about." You may point out a virtue, and the hypocrite shall at once say it is a vice.

II. And now we are going to *Cast Up the Hypocrite's Account for Him.*—Now, sir, bring us your ledger, and let us have a look at it. You are a hypocrite. Well, what is on the profit side? A good deal, I must confess. Here is, first of all, credit and honour. The next advantage is the ease which you enjoy. And, besides that, there are the honours which you have received. That is the profit side of your account. Now turn to the other, and take note of what there is against you. In the first place, I see a black item down here. Some of the people of the world do not think quite as much of you as you imagine. The poor widow does not give you much of a character. You will have to be very careful, sir, or your base deeds will come out. The very first item I see down here is a fear that your hypocrisy will be discovered. It would take you only

half as much trouble to be an honest man as it does to be a deceiver. A man who is in the habit of speaking truth need not mind how he opens his mouth, nor where; but a man who lies should be very careful, and have a very good memory, and recollect all he has ever said before, lest he should trip himself. But I see something worse than this; here is constant disquietude of conscience; hypocrites may seem as if they were at ease, but they cannot really be. The Christian who is true to God, and is really His child, can sometimes say, "I know that Jesus has taken away my sin." Assurance, vouchsafed to him by the Spirit, calms his fears, and he can rest in Christ. But the highest presumption to which the hypocrite can attain brings no such calm as that which is breathed upon the Christian by the lips of assurance. He can go to his bed, nay, he can go to his tomb in peace, but the hypocrite is afraid of a shadow and fleeth when no man pursueth. And last of all, Mr. Hypocrite, I see an item here which you usually forget; it is this—that, despite of your profession, God abhors you, and if there is one man more than another who stinks in the nostrils of Jehovah, it is such as thou art—thou miserable pretender. Death shall find thee out, and hell shall be thy doom, for the hope of the hypocrite is as the spider's web, soon swept away; and where is he when God taketh away his hope? This, then, is the casting up of the hypocrite's account, and there is a deficit of an infinite amount.

III. Now for the matter of the *Cure of the Hypocrite*.—The thought of a present Deity, if it were fully realised, would preserve us from sin; always looking on me, ever regarding me. We think we are doing many things in secret, but there is nothing concealed from Him with whom we have to do. And the day is coming when all the sins that we have com-

mitted shall be read and published.—C. H. Spurgeon.

The Use of Fear in Religion.

"Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."—Luke 12:5.

I. *In the First Place, the Emotion of Fear Ought to Enter Into the Consciousness of the Young*, because youth is naturally light-hearted. The ordinary cares of this life, which do so much towards moderating our desires and aspirations, have not yet pressed upon the ardent and expectant soul, and therefore it needs, more than others, to fear and to "stand in awe."

II. *Secondly, youth is elastic, and readily recovers from undue depression.* There is an elasticity in the earlier periods of human life that prevents long-continued depression. How rare it is to see a young person smitten with insanity! It is not until the pressure of anxiety has been long continued, and the impulsive spring of the soul has been destroyed, that reason is dethroned. The morning of our life may, therefore, be subjected to a subduing and repressing influence, with very great safety. It is well to bear the yoke in youth. The awe produced by a vivid impression from the eternal world may enter into the exuberant and gladsome experience of the young with very little danger of actually extinguishing it and rendering life permanently gloomy and unhappy.

III. *Thirdly, youth is exposed to sudden temptations and surprisals into sin.* The general traits that have been mentioned as belonging to the early period in human life render it peculiarly liable to solicitations. The whole being of a healthful hilarious youth, who feels life in every limb, thrills to temptation like the lyre to the plectrum. There are moments in the experience of the young

when all power of resistance seems to be taken away by the very witchery and blandishment of the object. He has no heart, and no nerve, to resist the beautiful siren. And it is precisely in these emergencies in his experience—in these moments when this world comes up before him clothed in pomp and gold, and the other world is so entirely lost sight of, that it throws in upon him none of its solemn shadows and warnings—it is precisely now, when he is just upon the point of yielding to the mighty yet fascinating pressure, that he needs to feel an impression, bold and startling, from the wrath of God. Nothing but the most active remedies will have any effect in this tumult and uproar of the soul.

IV. *In the fourth place, the feeling and principle of fear ought to enter into the experience of both youth and manhood, because it relieves from all other fear.* He who stands in awe of God can look down from a very great height upon all other perturbation. When we have seen Him from whose sight the heavens and the earth flee away, there is nothing in either the heavens or the earth that can produce a single ripple upon the surface of our souls.

V. *The fifth and last reason which we assign for cherishing the feeling and principle of fear applies to youth, to manhood, and to old age, alike; the fear of God conducts to the love of God.* Our Lord does not command us to fear "him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell" because such a feeling as this is intrinsically desirable, and is an ultimate end in itself; it is in itself undesirable, and it is only a means to an end. By it our torpid souls are to be awakened from their torpor; our numbness and hardness of mind in respect to spiritual objects are to be removed. We are never for a moment to suppose that the fear of perdition is set before us as a model and permanent form of experience to be

toiled after—a positive virtue and grace intended to be perpetuated through the whole future history of the soul. It is employed only as an antecedent to a higher and a happier emotion; and when the purpose for which it has been elicited has been answered, it then disappears. "Perfect love casteth out fear; for fear hath torment" (1 John 4:18). But, at the same time, we desire to direct attention to the fact that he who has been exercised with this emotion, thoroughly and deeply, is conducted by it into the higher and happier form of religious experience. Religious fear and anxiety are the prelude to religious peace and joy. These are the discords that prepare for the concords.—W. T. G. Shedd.

Confessing Christ.

"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."—Luke 12:8.

From these solemn words we gather—

I. That *Christianity Centres in the Person of Jesus Christ.*—Our Lord taught us much concerning ourselves—the inestimable value of our spiritual nature; the real source and spring of evil in our own souls; the true excellency of a human life; whom we should regard as our neighbour, etc. But He taught us still more of *Himself*—of His relations with the Divine Father; of His essential superiority even to the greatest among mankind; of His sorrow and His death on behalf of the human race; of His mission to enlighten, to redeem, to satisfy the souls of men. And He not only affirmed, but frequently and emphatically urged, the doctrine that, if we would enter into life, we must come into the very closest personal relation with *Himself*—trusting in

Him, loving Him, abiding in Him, following Him, making Him Refuge of the heart, Sovereign of the soul, Lord of the life. Not His truth, but Himself, is the Source of our strength and our hope.

II. That Jesus Christ Demands an Open Confession of Our Faith in Him.—More than once (Mark 8:38) He insisted upon a clear recognition of His authority and regal position. He will have us “confess him before men.” How shall we do that? 1. In a heathen country, by avowing the Christian faith, renouncing Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc., and declaring before all that Jesus Christ is the one Teacher of truth and Lord of man. 2. In a Christian country, by making it clear that we have accepted Him as the Lord whom we are living to serve. We shall probably think it right to do this by attaching ourselves to some particular Christian community; also by regular, public worship of Christ; but certainly, in all cases, (1) by paying honour to His name; (2) by upholding against His enemies the truth and worth of His religion; (3) by translating His will into active human life in all its departments—domestic, social, commercial, political, ecclesiastical.

III. That Compliance with His Demand Will Soon Prove to Be an Act of the First Importance.—The day draws on when we shall meet our Master: then will He tell us what He thinks of us. Then, if we have failed to honour Him, He will refuse to honour us “before the angels of God.” What is involved in that denial? The worst of all exclusions—exclusion from the favour, from the home, of God. And then, if we have honoured Him, He will acknowledge us as His own. And what will that include? 1. Acceptance with the Judge of all. 2. The expression of His Divine approval—the “well done” of the Lord. 3. Admission to the heavenly king-

dom, with all its advancing glory, its deepening joy, its extending influence, its enlarging life.—Henry Cotterill.

Some Ways of Denying Christ.

“But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.”—Luke 12:9.

I. We deny Christ when we advocate opinions which tend to lessen the authority of His religious teachings. II. It is denying Christ to represent Him as a mere man. He Himself said, “I and my Father are one. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.” And He commanded Thomas for addressing Him as “my Lord and my God.” How can any one affirm that He was only a man without the guilt of denying Him? III. We may often deny Christ by silence. No doubt some well-meaning people at times do harm by introducing religion into conversation under unsuitable circumstances, or by harsh polemical replies to what some unbeliever has said. But most of us are in far greater danger of a culpable silence when Christ’s truth ought to be vindicated and Christ’s own claim to reverence and trust ought to be earnestly and lovingly declared.

IV. We may deny Christ by appearing at places and engaging in pursuits which irreligious people themselves recognise as unsuitable for an earnest Christian. V. We deny Christ by neglecting efforts to spread the saving knowledge of Him at home and abroad. The Confederate general, Albert Sidney Johnston, in the last letter he wrote before he fell at Shiloh, said, “The popular test of a military man’s merit is success. It is a hard test, but it is the true one.” We do not believe that success is always the true test of merit, but beyond question it is the popular test. Now, many irreligious people con-

sider that Christianity is upon the whole a comparative failure. Large portions of the world it has never even nominally conquered. Some countries in which it once existed, including the Holy Land, have long been Mohammedan. And in the countries called Christian, a large proportion of the people are not really the subjects of Christ's spiritual reign. The hasty observer is wrong in concluding that Christ's work in the world is a failure; but must we not feel grief and shame at the thought that he has right plausible ground for such a conclusion? Just in proportion as we fail of any effort to spread Christ's spiritual reign, we give men an excuse for rejecting His authority and neglecting His salvation. And thus to act is in a distressing manner to deny Christ. 6. In fact, a Christian is always and everywhere either confessing Christ or denying Him. Every wrong act performed, every duty disregarded or imperfectly discharged, every indication of a character not conformed to His will and likened to His image, is, by the very necessity of the case, a denial of our Lord and Saviour.—J. A. Broadus.

Warning Against Covetousness.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness.—Luke 12:15.

I. *Covetousness Breeds Discontent, Anxiety, Envy, Jealousy.*—And hence it comes about that covetousness takes all the sweetness and peace out of our life. It makes us dissatisfied with our homes and surroundings. It keeps us for ever anxious as to our relative position. It sets us continually on comparison. It underestimates the pleasures and joys of life, and overvalues and magnifies its troubles. It makes the poor man wretched in his poverty, and hardens his heart against the rich. It energises the

man of competence with new vigour to compass overflowing abundance, and pushes forward the wealthy in the struggle for pre-eminence and power. In the prosperous it naturally develops into greed or reckless extravagance; in the disappointed, into hawking envy or green-eyed jealousy. It invades and spoils our religious life. It embitters us during the week by thoughts of our inferiority. It frets continually at the ordering of Providence. It destroys sweet confidence in God's wise and loving care. It sees evidences of the Divine partiality in the inequalities of the human lot. The good graciously granted turns to ashes on the lips because another has it in greater abundance. It keeps many a one from the house of God. It follows many another to the sanctuary to spoil the worship, and, through the sight of the eyes, to gangrene the soul more perfectly, and send it home burning with a deeper envy.

II. *Covetousness Misleads and Perverts the Judgment.*—Covetousness is to the mind what a distorting or coloured medium is to the eye. Just as everything in a landscape seen through such a medium is out of proportion or falsely coloured, so everything in life seen through the medium of covetousness appears under fearful distortion or most deceptive colouring. It breaks up the white light of truth into prismatic hues of falsehood and deceit.

III. *It Hardens the Heart and Destroys the Benevolent Affections.*—A cherished covetousness gradually crystallises into habit and principle. It narrows and pinches the entire being. It grows strong by indulgence. The more it has the more it wants. The more it gets the tighter it grasps it. An avaricious millionaire will haggle for a halfpenny as quickly as a day labourer. No meaner or more metallic being can be found than he in whom covetousness has done its

legitimate work. And hence comes much of the heartache of individuals, the misery of families, and the trouble of society. It leads men to deprive themselves of the comforts of life. It is deaf to the voice of natural affection.

IV. *It Tends to and Ends in Crime.*

—A strong desire to get confuses the judgment as to the proper means of getting, and gradually becomes unscrupulous in the use of means; ultimately all hesitation is overcome, all restraints broken through, all dangers braved. Get, it will at all hazards. Not that every covetous man becomes a criminal; but this is the tendency in every case. And when we remember that all overreaching, all petty deception and cheating, is in reality crime, it will go hard with the covetous man to clear his skirts. There is a vast amount of crime unseen by the law, but perfectly open to the view of heaven. "There's no shuffling there." But much of the known crime of the world—some of it the most atrocious and unnatural—springs directly from covetousness. Whence comes the reckless speculation, the stock-jobbing and gambling, which agitate the markets and unsettle trade? Whence the defalcations, breaches of trust, the forgeries which startle us by their frequency and enormity? Whence the highway robberies, burglaries, murders, which have affrighted every age, and still fill our sleeping hours with danger? The answer is plain: From a desire to get, cherished until it would not be denied. Such a desire in time becomes overmastering; it balks at nothing. Out of it spring crimes of every name and form, from the littlest to the most colossal, from the murder of a reputation to the murder of a nation, from the betrayal of a trust to the betrayal of the Son of God.

V. *It Ruins the Soul.*—In aiming to get the world, man loses himself. Every consideration heretofore urged

tends to this. The real life is neglected! God and His claims are forgotten. In sensual enjoyment the soul is drowned, and suddenly the end comes.—H. S. Kelsey.

The Gospel Invitation.

"*A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.*"—Luke 14:16.

The invitation to come is in harmony with the kingdom of heaven and in harmony with the character of man. An invitation implies a happiness. When a calamity or a sorrow is before us, we are not invited to it—we are drawn hither by an irresistible power. But when earth has a joyful event, or one that promises happiness, invitations are issued, because it is not conceivable that man would need to be driven toward happiness. Thus the invitation harmonises with the kingdom of Christ, for it is a happiness. Whether you contemplate that kingdom as reaching through eternity with its blessedness, or as filling earth with its virtue and faith and hope, it is the highest happiness of which we can conceive. It is, indeed, a feast of love, of knowledge, of virtue; and hence is a blessedness worthy of the word "Come." The word is also in harmony with the character of man, for, being a free agent, he is not to be forced towards blessedness, but only invited.

I. *Now This Word "Come" Contains No Deep Mystery.* It is not a tantalising request to do what we cannot do. It is not irony, as though one should say to a blind man, "See this rose!" or a deaf mind, "Oh! please hear this music." The Bible is the last book in the world to be accused of trifling with the soul, for it is the soul it loves, and for it it prays and weeps. It is not to be inferred from this that the heart can

correct itself and forgive itself and sanctify itself; but what is to be inferred is that the will it not a mockery, not a dead monarch, but is a king upon a throne, and can command the soul to go many a path that leads to God. You can all start upon a heavenly road, for there is not a movement of the heart toward God that is not a part of this large "Come." Where the human ends and the Divine begins no one can tell, any more than in nature one can tell where the rain and earth and sunshine cease to work in the verdure, and where they are supplanted by the presence of God. There is no tree that stands in the woods by its own act. God is there. So no Christian stands up strong in his own sole effort. God's grace is somewhere. But yet, for all this, great are the power and responsibility of the soul. Nothing in religion can be true that renders void the law of personal effort.

II. But we pass by this "coming," and go to the second thought—"All Things Are Ready." I shall not restrict myself here to the exact import of the text, but shall accept of the words in all their breadth and application. 1. Religion is ready for you. Having passed through myriad shapes—Pagan, Mosaic, Grecian, Roman—religion seems to have found in the Gospel of Christ a final readiness for human use. Reason may learn to deny all religion, science may hear and then teach atheism, but when the thought turns to a positive religion, there is at last one ready, the religion of our Lord; it is ready for you and me. But when we have declared it ready as a philosophical system, we have only told half the truth, for to this it adds the readiness of an ever-living Father and Saviour standing by each of you as a mother, and waiting to welcome you. 2. Let us proceed now to our second head: You are ready for this religion. I do

not mean that you feel ready, for there are doubts and sins that stand between the soul and religion. The obstacle is not in the world without, but within. But I have said you are ready. In what sense? In this: that your life has come to its responsible, intelligent years. The lineaments of God—knowledge, wisdom, reason, love, hope, life—have all unfolded, and heré we are all to-day, moving in all the spiritual qualities of Deity, and yet are willingly in the vale of sin. The ignorance of youth has passed away: we are children no more. Vice has revealed her wretchedness, and virtue her utility and beauty, and with intellects so discerning, and with an experience so complete, and then clothed with the attributes of God, we are all marching to the grave, a solemn gateway between action and judgment, between time and eternity. These facts make me declare we are ready for that sentiment called religion that makes man one with God. I confess that we all are ready for the Gospel of Christ—ready for its virtue, its mediation, its sunny hopes. 3. Society is ready for you to accept the gift. I hope that old day has wholly gone when men were afraid to profess Christianity lest an outside world might ridicule the "new life." Little of this fear is any longer perceptible. I imagine that the growth of individual liberty—the growth of the consciousness of it, rather—has silenced both the ridicule and the sensibility to it. It is only ignorance and narrowness that ever ridicule the profession of religion. But we pass from this conscious readiness to that of need and fact. Society is toiling to-day under the awful calamities of vice, slavery, dishonour, and crime, and is sorrowfully ready for millions of wicked ones to read and imitate the life of Jesus Christ. When society was ruled by brute force, as in the days of Cæsar or Peter the Great, it mattered little what might

be in the hearts of the populace, for, if it was crime, there was a policeman for each citizen; and if it was sorrow in the heart of woman or child or slave, nobody cared. But in our day, when the vice of the heart breaks out, and there is more reliance upon education than upon the knout or chains, and when the upper classes have reached an education that makes indifference to sorrow impossible, in such an age society begs the Christian religion to come to its help. In the old empire of Cyrus there were, all along the highways, criminals with hands or feet cut off, or heads of offenders raised up, to keep the populace in constant fear. What that age demanded in its heart was not a Gospel, but an ever-present police. It did not know of anything better. But our land, based upon the nobleness and equality of man, and springing up out of brotherly love, and every day strengthening this sentiment by education, silently begs that its millions, high and low, shall come unto Jesus Christ.—David Swing.

Reasons Why Men Are Not Christians.

"They all with one consent began to make excuse."—Luke 14:18.

I. Our first point relates to *The Causes or Reasons Why Men Are Not Christians*, or, in other words, why they wish to be excused from being Christians—which is the form in which it is presented in the text. There is something remarkable in the aspect which the subject assumes on the first view of it. Men ask to be excused, as if it were a matter of favour. It is natural to ask, From what? From a rich banquet, says the parable from which my text is taken. From the hope of heaven through Jesus Christ. From loving God and keeping His commandments.

From that which is fitted to make a man more useful, respected, and beloved in life, remembered with deeper affection when he is dead, honoured for ever in heaven. In searching for the causes or reasons why men wish to be excused from becoming Christians, I may be allowed to suggest that they are often under a strong temptation to conceal those which are real, and to suggest others which will better answer their immediate purpose. My idea is, that the real cause is not always avowed, and that men are strongly tempted to suggest others. The actual reason may be such as, on many accounts, a man would have strong reluctance to have known. The grand reason why men are not Christians, as I understand it, is the opposition of the heart to religion; that mysterious opposition that can be traced back through all hearts, and all generations, up to the great apostasy—the fall of Adam. 1. A feeling that you do not need salvation in the way proposed in the Gospel; that you do not need to be born again, or pardoned through the merits of the Redeemer. The feeling is, that your heart is by nature rather inclined to virtue than to vice, to good than to evil; that the errors of your life have been comparatively few, your virtues many. 2. You suppose that in your case there is no danger of being lost—or not such danger as to make it a subject of serious alarm. The idea is this, that if the duties of this life be discharged with faithfulness, there can be no serious ground of apprehension in regard to the world to come. 3. A secret scepticism about the truth of Christianity. The mind is not settled. The belief is not firm that it is a revelation from heaven. 4. A fourth class are deterred by a feeling that the Divine government is unreasonable and severe. In one of His parables the Saviour has taught us expressly that this operated in preventing a man from doing his

duty, and being prepared for His coming (Matt. 24: 24, 25). 5. A fifth class are deterred from being Christians by hostility to some member or members of the Church. 6. A sixth reason which prevents men from becoming Christians is worldliness—the desire of this world's goods, or pleasures, or honours.

II. Our next point is, *To Inquire Whether These Reasons for Not Being a Christian Are Satisfactory*. Satisfactory to whom? you may ask. I answer, To conscience and to God. Are they such as are sufficient reasons for not loving God? 1. You dare not yourselves urge them as the real cause why you do not attend to religion, and embrace the offers of mercy. They are so little satisfactory to your own minds that when we come to you and urge you to become Christians, we are met with other reasons than these. You resort to some difficulty about the doctrine of ability, and the decrees of God, some metaphysical subtlety that you know may embarrass us, but which you think of on no other occasion. Who will dare to urge as a reason for not becoming a Christian the fact that he is sensual, or proud, or worldly-minded, or ambitious, or covetous, or self-righteous, or that he regards God as a tyrant? 2. These excuses will not stand when a man is convicted for sin. All, when the hour comes in which God designs to bring them into His kingdom, confess that they had no good reasons for not being His friends, and for their having so long refused to yield to the claims of God. 3. The same thing occurs on the bed of death. The mind then is often overwhelmed, and under the conviction that the excuses for not being a Christian were insufficient, the sinner in horror dies. But I will not dwell on that. I pass to one other consideration. 4. It is this. These excuses will not be admitted at the bar of God.—A. Barnes.

Christ's Demeanour Towards Sinners.

"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."—Luke 15: 2.

The heathen philosopher Seneca made a practice of dining with his slaves, and when challenged for an innovation so directly in the teeth of all customary proprieties and so offensive to the Roman mind, he defended himself by saying that he dined with some because they were worthy of his esteem, and with others that they might become so. The action and its defence were alike admirable, and read a salutary lesson to the aristocrats of Rome. But it was even a greater shock to the Pharisees, and if possible even more unaccountable, that Jesus should prefer the society of notorious sinners to their own irreproachable manners and decorous conversation. They could not understand why a teacher of holy life, instead of frowning upon the notoriously profligate, should show a preference for their society. Our Lord's explanation is ample and thorough. He devotes, therefore, the three parables recorded in this chapter to this purpose. It is perhaps worth remarking that on one point He felt that no explanation was required. Even the Pharisees did not suspect Him of any sympathy with sin. These critics of His conduct had not failed to remark that in His presence the daring profanity and audacious licence of wicked men were tamed. Those who so narrowly criticised our Lord's conduct might have seen its reasonableness had they been able to look at it from another point of view. With equal surprise they might have exclaimed: "Sinners receive this man and eat with him." These dissolute and lawless characters could themselves have explained the change. They were attracted to Jesus, because together with unmistakable sanctity, and even somehow appearing

as the chief feature of His sanctity, there was an understanding of the sinner's position and a hopefulness about him which threw a hitherto unknown spell over them. Separate from sinners, as they had never before felt any one to be, He seemed to come closer to their heart by far than any other had come. He had a heart open to all their troubles. He saw them through and through, and yet showed no loathing, no scorn, no astonishment, no perplexity, no weariness. Instead of meeting them with upbraiding and showing them all they had lost, He gave them immediate entrance into His own pure, deep, efficient love, and gladdened their hearts with a sense of what they yet had in Him. Therefore men whose seared conscience felt no other touch, who had a ready scoff for every other form of holiness, admitted this new power and yielded to it. The contrast between this new attitude of a holy person towards the sinner and that to which men had commonly been accustomed has been finely described in the following words: "He who thought most seriously of the disease held it to be curable; while those who thought less seriously of it pronounced it incurable. Those who loved their race a little made war to the knife against its enemies and oppressors! He who loved it so much as to die for it made overtures of peace to them. The half-just judge punished the convicted criminal; the thoroughly just judge offered him forgiveness. Perfect justice here appears to take the very course which would be taken by injustice." It is this, then, that calls for explanation. And it is explained by our Lord in three parables, each of which illustrates the fact that a more active interest in any possession is aroused by the very circumstance that it is lost.

I. The first point, then, suggested by these parables is *That God Suffers*

Loss in Every Sinner that Departs from Him. This was what the Pharisees had wholly left out of account, that God loves men and mourns over every ill that befalls them. And this is what we find it so hard to believe.

II. Secondly, these parables suggest that *The Very Fact of Our Being Lost Excites Action of a Specially Tender Kind Toward Us.* God does not console Himself for our loss by the fellowship of those who have constantly loved Him. He does not call new creatures into being, and so fill up the blank we have made by straying from Him. He is not a Sovereign who has no personal knowledge of His subjects, nor an employer of labour who can always get a fresh hand to fill an emptied post: He is rather a Shepherd who knows His sheep one by one, a Father who loves His children individually. He would rather restore the most abandoned sinner than blot him from his place to substitute an archangel. Love is personal and settles upon individuals. It is not all the same to God if some other person is saved while you are not. These parables thus bring us face to face with the most significant and fertile of all realities—God's love for us. This love encompasses you whether you will or no. Love cannot remain indifferent or quiescent. Interference of a direct and special kind becomes necessary. The normal relations being disturbed, and man becoming helpless by the disturbance, it falls to God to restore matters. A new set of ideas and dealings is brought into play. So long as things go smoothly and men by nature love God and seek to do His will, there is no anxiety, no meeting of emergencies by unexpected effort, hidden resources, costly sacrifice. But when sin brings into view all that is tragic, and when utter destruction seems to be man's appointed destiny, there is called into exercise the deepest tenderness, the utmost power of the Di-

vine nature. Here where the profoundest feeling of God is concerned, where His connection with His own children is threatened, Divinity is stirred to its utmost. This appears, among other things, in the spontaneity and persistence of the search God institutes for the lost.

III. The third point illustrated by these parables is *The Exceeding Joy Consequent on the Restoration of the Sinner*. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." The joy is greater, because the effort to bring it about has been greater, and because for a time the result has been in suspense, so that when the end is attained there is a sense of clear gain. The joy of success is proportioned to the difficulty, the doubtfulness of attaining it. All the hazards and sacrifices of the search are repaid by the recovery of the lost. The value of the unfallen soul may be intrinsically greater than the value of the redeemed; but the joy is proportioned, not to the value of the article, but to the amount of anxiety that has been spent upon it.—M. Dods.

The Sense of Obligation.

"How much owest thou unto my lord?"—Luke 16:5.

This is a question which occurs, as is well known, in the Parable of the Unjust Steward.

The one characteristic, then, which the master signals out for appreciation in the steward is his shrewdness, his foresight, his prudence. "The lord," i.e., the master, "commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely"—not rightly, or honourably, but prudently.

I. *That Is the Feature of His Conduct, the One Feature, Which Jesus Christ Holds Up to the Admiration*

and Imitation of Christians. He says, in effect, "Why will not my disciples learn from men of the world the everyday lesson of common sense; why will they not follow the same business-like principle in the spiritual life as in commercial life"; why should it be true now, and is it to be true forever, that "the children of this world are in"—or, "as regards"—"their generation wiser than the children of light?"

God says to every man: "You have only one earthly life to live. If you waste the golden days of youth, if you dissipate them in indolence or frivolity, they will never come back to you; and all that you might have been and ought to have been, you will never be." Yet how pitiful is the thousand times repeated tale of misspent years and squandered opportunities, and hopes as disappointing as the bitter apples of the Dead Sea!

II. *"The Children of This World," "the Children of Light"—How Strange and Sad Is the Contrast* which the Lord in the parable points between them! It is as though He said: "Look at yon man of business; his heart is set upon making a fortune; see how careful he is, how sedulous, how thrifty; he rises so early, he goes to bed so late, he eats the bread of carefulness; many a time all through the day he sits at his desk, he is the creature of industrious habit, he denies himself, it may be for many years, every needless pleasure, indulgence, or extravagance; and he gains his reward. He began life as a clerk at £1 a week, and he ends it as head of a great commercial house. But now look at the man who aspires to win heaven—how easily he takes things, how little trouble he gives himself about them! The time that he spends in prayer, in the study of God's Word, in public worship—what a poor fraction it is of all his life! He seems to think it is possible to saunter into heaven. But why should

it be reasonable to assume that the pearl of great price is the only treasure which can be had for the mere asking, without the necessity of working for it?

III. Our Lord Speaks Especially of Riches. Among all His words in the Gospel none perhaps are more intuitively wise than the words which He used about riches.

Riches are not wrong, but they are spiritually perilous. Our Lord says in the parable, Use them well, not foolishly or selfishly, but so as to make friends by your wise generosity—friends among the poor, the hungry, the necessitous, the suffering, “that when ye fail,” i.e., when ye die, “they may receive you into the everlasting habitations.”

This is the law of the future life; but it is the law of the present life as well.

IV. I Cannot Read the Parable of the Unjust Steward Without Feeling That Underlying It All Is the Three-fold Relation Which Characterises the Church of Jesus Christ.

There is the great Master, the Lord of All, who will one day summon all His servants to render their account. There are the stewards, whoever they may be, the ministers of the great Master, the intermediaries between Him and His tenants at will; it is expressly stated that the parable was addressed to the disciples. There are the tenants themselves, whose life is so uncertain, so precarious; and they are all indebted in a larger or less degree to the same great Master.

To them all comes the question of my text—“How much owest thou unto my Lord?”—Bishop Welldon.

Retribution.

“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool

my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.”—Luke 16: 24.

I. The Parable Teaches, First, That If We Dedicate Our Lives to the Good Things of This World, We Shall Forfeit the Good Things of the Next. This is written in broad and deep lines throughout the picture, and if this is not intended as a serious truth, then the whole parable is a mischief and a snare. Earthly greatness gives no warrant of heavenly greatness. We may most truly possess the present life by living for the next, but we cannot gain a drop of cold water in the next by living for this. If we store up our good things in this life, death will make us bankrupt. This is the first solemn lesson of the parable, this is the unchanging law of righteousness.

II. The Lesson Goes Still Further, and Teaches that Self-gratification in this Life Will Be Followed by the Retribution of Anguish in the Next. The subtle explanation of future pain as being nothing more than the gnawings of the sinner’s conscience—an evasion intended to deny the direct infliction of retribution by the hand of God—will certainly not satisfy the picture given in this parable. The rich man has entered into a state and into circumstances in which pain is inflicted upon him. The retribution of our sin is not left to our own conscience in this life. Why, then, should we imagine that it will receive no direct punishment in the life to come? What, then, will be the form which such retribution will take? Thank God, I do not know. It is enough to know that the God of love is a consuming fire to the ungodly. Terrible is He in righteousness. Let us, therefore, fear Him.

III. The Parable Further Teaches That the Most Unhonoured Condition of Earthly Life Cannot Exclude from the Most Honourable Status in the Heavenly Life. Poverty and affliction

on earth are not a sign of God's displeasure.

IV. The Parable, Further, Emphasises the Genuine Continuity of This Life with the Next. The life beyond death will be related to the life here with as perfect continuity as our life to-day is related to that of yesterday. Continuity is also taught here in the form of immediateness. Jesus teaches in this parable that judgment and reward begin immediately after death. It is true that the consummation of penalty and reward cannot come till the completion of His kingdom, but the beginnings do not tarry.—John Thomas.

Discourses from Heaven and Hell.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me," &c.—Luke 16:24.

Here we have two wonderful discourses preached to earth from the eternal world. We notice:—

I. The Pulpits from Which They Are Delivered. Heaven and hell.

First: They are two different places. What the essence of a spirit is we cannot tell. Judging from its properties, and comparing them with those of matter, we say the soul is immaterial; nevertheless it is a substance, a real existence. The body is material; a spiritual body must also be material; spiritualised bodies will inherit the world to come; the redeemed and the lost will occupy space. There are a local heaven and a local hell.

Secondly: They are two different conditions. Different metaphors are used in Scriptures to represent the state of the saved and the lost—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters:

and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:16, 17). The meaning is that they will be supplied with everything that is necessary to constitute true happiness. The words of our Saviour are very expressive of misery and torment—"Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48). The worm that eateth the corpse in the grave will itself die of hunger when the substance is all devoured; the fire that burnt human victims ceased when it had nothing more to devour; but in hell torment will never cease as long as existence will continue; and we know that a spirit will never be annihilated. The peasant in his hut is often happier than the earl in his mansion. As regards the place itself, heaven would be hell to the unconverted; and vice versa, each will depend on the state of mind of the individual.

*"Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels or archangels dwell;
One sin unslain within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as
hell."*

II. The Speakers by Whom They Are Delivered. Abraham and the rich man.

First: They are two human beings. Being of the same nature as ourselves, they can better sympathise with us, knowing from experience the state we are in; and consequently they have deeper claims upon our attention.

Secondly: They are two human beings that were very rich in this world. Abraham was rich. A dispute arose between him and his nephew concerning their riches; men never quarrel about poverty; they always aspire to, and disagree about, riches. Observe,—rich men may either be godly or ungodly; riches are no test of character: one was rich and saved, but the other rich and lost.

Thirdly: They are two human beings that have reached their own destiny. In passing from this world to the next, we shall not lose ourselves in the crowd. Abraham and the rich man were distinctly identified in a future state—the individual will reach his own goal.

III. The Subjects on Which They Are Delivered. We shall commence with that of the rich man.

First: He teaches the future punishment of the wicked. "I am tormented in this flame." This flame! Reviewing the past, remembering what mercies and privileges were abused, how he neglected the means of grace and despised the Saviour. This flame! Glancing at the present, seeing that he is surrounded by a host of fiends—fornicators, liars, robbers, thieves, drunkards, and all the workers of abomination. This flame! Meditating on the future; what he may expect. Hope and expectation enliven our present career, but what hope have the damned? Not even a single promise of renovation. A dark future is worse than a dark present.

Secondly: He teaches that the great want of hell is mercy. "Have mercy on me." Every blessing has its own season. Harvest is never given in winter; so mercy is never given in hell. It has its own season.

Thirdly: He teaches that we should do our best for the conversion of our ungodly relations. "For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come unto this place of torment." A man always enjoys the society of his relations except in hell. There even the sympathising mother will willingly part with her children and prefer hell alone. Next we come to Abraham's discourse:—

First: He teaches the equity of the Divine government. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is

comforted, and thou art tormented." There are comfort and torment connected with sin. If we crucify the old man in this world we shall be comforted hereafter; but if otherwise, sin must be punished in the future. Choose between a moment and an eternal torment.

Secondly: He teaches that the state of the lost is hopeless. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Some think that hell is a house of correction; and that after a long and severe training the lost will learn obedience and will be finally restored. But that doctrine is nowhere taught in the Bible (Rev. 22:11).

Thirdly: He also justifies God's mode of dealing with sinners as being the best. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," &c. If preaching Christ crucified will be ineffectual, then no greater wonder can be preached.—T. Davis.

The Retributive Power of Memory.

"Son, remember."—Luke 16:25.

Those who believe in the immortality of the soul must also believe in the immortality of its faculties—reason, memory, conscience.

I. *What, Then, Is Memory?* Let us first define the faculty.—Every one is aware of the fact that the knowledge which we have once acquired, the things we have seen and done, the experiences that we have had, though not always present to the mind, are nevertheless so retained, that the same things may be, and often are, recalled to our mental notice. Every one is fully conscious of such a fact in his own history. We designate this fact by the term memory. Memory is, therefore, the mind's power

of preserving and knowing its own past history. It is the same in both worlds. We are, moreover, so constructed, that we cannot discredit the knowledge given by memory. I am as certain of what I distinctly remember, as I can be of anything. The absolute loss of memory would destroy the whole framework of man's mental existence, by limiting his intellectual life to the impressions of the passing moments.

II. Let me say that *Memory Operates in Obedience to Established and Permanent Laws*.—By them we conduct the process of memory. We do it without labour, yea, by necessity, having no power not to do it. Thus we think of ourselves as intelligent, conscious, voluntary, in both worlds, in both exercising memory according to fixed laws, some of which at least rule our present life.

III. I wish to call your attention to the *Extent of Its Retentive and Reproductive Power*.—In the amazing greatness of this power, as we observe it in time, we shall perhaps find the condition of at least conjecturing what it will be in eternity. It was the opinion of Lord Bacon that nothing in one's antecedent history is ever irrecoverably forgotten. Coleridge held the same view. We know, as a matter of positive experience, that the prominent and leading facts of life past are safely retained in the bosom of memory. The many instances of remarkable memory that we gather from history are an instructive commentary upon the greatness of this power. Themistocles, we are told, could call by their names the twenty thousand citizens of Athens. It is said of Cyrus that he could repeat the name of every soldier in his army. There are also many striking and peculiar cases of resuscitated knowledge, in which apparently extinct memories are suddenly restored. Numerous instances of quickened memory, under

the influence of physical causes, show what the mind may do under special and extraordinary exaltations of its activity. Persons on the brink of death by drowning are said to have unusually vivid visions of the past. If such be memory here, in this nascent state of our being—this mere infancy of our intellectual life—what may it not be, and what may it not do, when, with our other faculties, freed from a body of flesh and blood, it shall soar in progressive expansion and enlargement through the ages of a coming eternity?

IV. What is to be the *Impression of Memory Upon Our Happiness or Misery in the Future World*?—That so great a power will make an impression upon the soul, pleasant or painful, according to the character of the facts embraced in the exercise, is an inference derivable not only from the greatness of the power, but equally from the ample materials of our present experience.—S. T. Spear.

The Second Redemption.

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."—Luke 21:28.

"Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Jesus Christ led His disciples to think that beyond the redemption which He was working out for them, and subsequent to it in time, was another great deliverance which should prove of unspeakable value to them. This is true now of our discipleship; we look for and we sorely need a second redemption.

I. *Its Character*.—It is not, like the first, distinctively and purely spiritual. *That was*; men were yearning for a political revolution and redemption. But the kingdom of heaven

was not to be "of this world"; it was to be wholly inward and spiritual; it was to be our redemption from sin and restoration to the favour and the likeness of our Divine Father. But the second redemption is not distinctively and primarily that of the soul; it is to be "the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8: 23). It will have a gracious and beneficent effect, a redeeming and elevating influence, upon the soul; but in the first instance it is a redemption from a troublous and trying condition; it is being taken away, by the appearance of Christ, in the providence of God, from a state in which happy service is almost impossible; it is a removal from storm to calm, from hostile to friendly forces, from turbulence to serenity; from hard conflict, or tense anxiety, or painful suffering, to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God." It is a blessed and merciful change from unfavourable to favourable conditions.

II. Our Human Need of It.—We are not of this world, we who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and renewed by the Spirit of God. And we may be nobly, even grandly, victorious over it, being "always caused to triumph" by that Divine Spirit that dwells within us, and "strengthens us with all might." Yet are we actually, and by universal experience, seriously affected by it, and we suffer many things as we pass through it. We may suffer, as the early Christians did (to whom these words were addressed), from persecution, and thereby be made "most miserable" (1 Cor. 15: 19). Our life may be made worthless, or worse than worthless, to us by the cruelties of our fellow-men. Or we may suffer so much from privation of privilege, or from the struggles of daily life, or from grief and disappointment, or from a steadily advancing decrepitude, that we may earnestly long for this second redemption, the redemption of

our body. We may be in sore need of its approach, of its presence.

III. Its Kindly Shadow.—It will then be much to us, perhaps everything, that our redemption draweth nigh. 1. It is *something* that at any moment we may be within a step of the heavenly sphere; for anything we know, Christ may be about to say concerning us, "This day ye shall be with me in Paradise." 2. It is *more* that we may be confident that a life of holy activity will rapidly pass away and bring us to the day of rest and of reward. 3. It is very much indeed that the duration of the blessed future will prove to be such that any number of years of earthly trouble will be nothing in comparison. 4. It is also a truth full of hope and healing that every day spent in faithful service or patient waiting brings us that distance nearer to the blessedness that lies beyond.

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

Beneath the varied and heavy burdens of time we are fain to bow our heads; but we shall lift them up with strength and eager-hearted expectation as we realise that every step forward is a step onward to the heavenly horizon.—William Clarkson.

Penitence.

"*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter . . . and Peter went out and wept bitterly.*"—Luke 22: 61, 62.

We find here four outstanding characteristics of the state of penitence:

I. It Is a Divine Thing. It began with God. Peter did not turn. But "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." Now the result of this distinction is this: that there are two kinds of sorrow for sin. And these are different in their origin, in their

religious value, and in their influence on our life. 1. The commoner kind is when a man does wrong, and, in the ordinary sense of the word, is sorry that he has done it. But it is no true sorrow for sin. It is sorrow that we were weak enough to sin. 2. Contrast with such a penitence the publican's prayer of penitence in the temple. It was no chagrin nor wounded pride with him. The difference between the publican's penitence and the first-named sorrow is just the difference between the Divine and the human. The one is God turning and looking upon man, the other is man turning and looking upon himself.

II. But now, secondly, we come to the *sensitiveness of penitence*. There is nothing more sensitive in all the world than a human soul which has once been quickened into its delicate life by the touch of the Divine. Men seldom estimate aright the exquisite beauty and tenderness of a sinner's heart. There is a text in the Psalms which uses the strange expression, the gentleness of God. Coarse treatment never wins souls. Here, then, are two great lessons—the gentleness of God, and the gentleness of the soul—the one as Divine a marvel as the other.

III. We learn from Peter's recovery that *spiritual experience is intense*. Peter wept bitterly, and this short sentence forever settles the question of emotion in religion. Every sin that was ever done demands a bitter penitence. And if there is little emotion in a man's religion, it is because there is little introspection. Religion without emotion is religion without reflection.

IV. *Penitence Is a Lonely Thing*. Peter went out. Men know two kinds of loneliness, it has been said—a loneliness of space and a loneliness of spirit. Peter's was loneliness of spirit. But what gave the beauty to Peter's loneliness was this—that he took God's time to be alone. Peter's penitence was not only an intense

thing and a lonely thing, it was an immediate thing. When God speaks He speaks so loud that all the voices of the world seem dumb. And yet when God speaks He speaks so softly that no one hears the whisper but yourself.—Henry Drummond.

The Saviour's Grace.

"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."—Luke 23:42.

I. *There Is a Reference to Place.* "Thou shalt be in Paradise." The royal garden of an Oriental palace was called a paradise. The word suggests the ideas of abundance, security, beauty, and delight. Paradise has been regained by Christ—a better paradise than our first parents ever knew; for the serpent shall never creep into it, the tempter's trail shall never pollute it, Satan shall not approach it nor taint its purity by his poisonous breath. There flows the river of the water of life, issuing clear as crystal from the throne of God and of the Lamb. There grows the tree which bears twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. No law forbids those who enter there to pluck and eat. No sword of the cherubim turns every way to debar access. There the rose is without a thorn.

II. *The Gracious Answer of Christ Referred to Company as Well as Place.* "Thou shalt be with me." The dying thief might have had doubts as to the meaning of the word "paradise." Where is it? What are its occupations and its joys? Who will be my companions? But, to prevent all painful perplexity, our Lord, in addition to the promise of paradise, added that of Himself—"Thou shalt be with me." To be with Christ is represented throughout the New Testament as the climax of the believer's

hope. Jesus said, as the greatest reward He could offer—"Where I am, there shall also my servant be." He consoled His disciples with the assurance, "I will come again, and take you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He interceded on their behalf, saying—"Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Stephen's hope in death was expressed in the prayer—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." St. Paul said he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." And Jesus promised this to the dying thief—"Thou shalt be with me." The promise of being with Christ includes perfect pardon, perfect purity, and perfect bliss. The father of the preacher, now, for some years, in the presence of that Sinner's Friend whom he so loved to publish, used to tell of a soldier he well knew, who, in reward for character and long services, received from the commander-in-chief a captain's commission. But he did not feel comfortable in his rank, for he fancied he was looked down upon by his new companions on account of his origin. There can be nothing more vulgar than to treat with dishonour those who have risen to a higher station. It needs no brains to possess money acquired by one's ancestors, and rank attained by birth is not necessarily allied to genius, virtue, or achievements. To affect to despise those who, by rising from a humble origin, prove that they have merit as well as rank, is a mark of a mean and little mind. We will hope the soldier was mistaken, for British officers are gentlemen. But he felt uncomfortable and asked to be restored to his former position. The commander-in-chief, guessing the reason, ordered a grand parade at the garrison, then, calling him by his title, walked up and down with him in familiar conversation. After this he no longer

imagined that he was regarded with disfavour by his new associates. If we may compare the poor paltry distinctions of earth with those of heaven, this is what Jesus did to the dying thief. He said—"Thou shalt be with *me*." I will welcome thee at the threshold; I will lead thee by the hand into the palace; I will introduce thee to its glorious inhabitants, the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; thou shalt be with *me*.

III. *Our Lord's Reply Related to Time.* "To-day." 1. This proves the continued conscious existence of the soul after death. Surely if the dying thief had been about to fall into a deep sleep for hundreds or thousands of years the promise of being that day in paradise with Jesus would have been inappropriate and delusive. 2. We also learn that the soul of a believer is at death fitted to be at once with Jesus. There must have been plenary and immediate absolution for the penitent thief. If on that very day with Jesus, on that very day fit to be with Him, and therefore purified from all sin. (1) But is it just that a man who has lived in wickedness should, on repentance, be taken at once to paradise, as though he had never sinned? This would indeed be a difficulty were it not that Jesus died for sinners. A crucified Christ solves the mystery. Because His perfect obedience and atoning death satisfied the claims of law, those who trust in Him are delivered from the condemnation of that law. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." (2) But apart from considerations of justice, is it suitable and fit that a man who has all his life been a wilful transgressor, should on repentance, go to dwell with Jesus? Certainly, if he is no longer what he was. Consider. You have a ship about to sail with a valuable cargo; but she cannot leave the harbour till the tide turns. Presently she swings round with the al-

tered current. Now weigh anchor and set sail! If some one were to say "No, not yet, you are too hasty, the tide has only just turned," would you not despise the folly of such an objection? And in this dying thief the stream of his soul, which had been running down to death, had turned and was now flowing up to life, and why should not he take it at the tide and with it enter heaven? 3. We learn that earth is very near to heaven. "How glorious the hope—there may be but a step between me and paradise." (1) Let us then be patient in affliction. Are we repining because of trials, murmuring at some difficult duty, some painful sacrifice? What? when angels and departed friends may be weaving our chaplet of victory, tuning our golden harp of praise, and gathering round the threshold to bid us welcome! Shall we give way to impatience, when this very day we may be in paradise? (2) Let this nearness make us steadfast in resisting temptation. Shall we give up the fight when on the point of winning the victory? Shall we turn back in the journey when round the rock just before us we may be within sight of home?—Newman Hall.

Patience and Mercy.

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."—Luke 23: 42, 43.

In the life of Christ, extremes—dignity and degradation—met. The union of extremes became more intimate as His life drew to a close. On Calvary is reached its climax. In the circumstances of a dying malefactor, Jesus exercises the prerogatives of God.

I. *The Prayer of Penitence.* "Lord,

remember," etc. Some prayers come from the surface of our hearts; they are like bubbles on the surface of the sea. Some prayers come from the depths of our nature; they are like pearls from the ocean's bed. Of this latter kind is the prayer of the penitent thief. It is a type of all true prayer, especially the prayer of contrition.

First: It manifests a just appreciation of the Saviour's character. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Circumstances often assist a man's faith. An unbeliever, when dying, will often embrace any creed you like to give him. Though this penitent would probably have been both unwilling and dull if the disciples had attempted to teach him of the Messiahship of Jesus—yet, in prospect of death, it seems to be easy and natural for him to offer a prayer in which he recognises in Jesus the King of the spiritual world.

Secondly: It is borne on the wings of a resistless faith. The faith of a penitent is liable to be staggered by three questions. 1. Am I coming in an acceptable manner? I have not had Saul's blindness, nor the jailor's agony, nor Mary's tearfulness. Am I right? The thief's faith answered this question. The foundation of his faith was a consciousness that he was approaching Jesus in the best way he knew of. When our prayers and penitence are honest, they are acceptable. 2. Can Jesus save me? If ever the power of Christ to save were doubtful, it was so on Calvary. If the malefactor had confidence in saying to Jesus crucified, "Lord, remember me," much more confidence may we have in sending up the breathings of our contrition to Christ glorified. 3. Will Jesus save me? If ever man might reasonably have doubted the willingness of the Saviour to receive, the thief might. He came with crimes enough to crowd

a lifetime; and he came in haste, without an hour's repentance. But his faith soars above the mountain of his sins. If such a character might have confidence towards Christ, who may not? We may.

Thirdly: It bears the stamp of earnestness. It is probable that this prayer was not uttered in a loud voice. This prayer was heard by few, but how earnest it is! See ye not the man's earnestness in—1. The subject of his prayer. When people came to Jesus, it was generally for temporal good. Here is a suppliant who stands in greater need of temporal good than any one who had previously applied to the Lord; yet this man prays about his soul only. If his spiritual earnestness made him look upon the agony of crucifixion as a secondary matter, how great was that earnestness! And see ye not his earnestness in—2. The smallness of his request. Some may think that the more earnest a suppliant is the more he will ask for. Hardly so. Instance the beggar who demands gold to save himself from immediate starvation. The prayer of the wife of Zebedee, if offered by this man, would not have proved the existence of any deep yearnings for mercy. Was the Magdalene in earnest? the Syrophenician? the publican? Even more so the man who asks—not a throne—not even a place—but merely that the Saviour will cast back a passing thought to the poor wretch who perished at his side.

II. *The Response of Mercy.* "Verily I say," etc. We shall not enter into a critical consideration of this word "paradise." It could not be contained in the corner of a discourse. Be it sufficient to say that paradise always has reference to a state of pleasure. View rather the glory of the mercy which promises paradise to the penitent.

First: Jesus did not hesitate. The Church shrunk from receiving Saul

into its communion. Probably the Church now would keep a "penitent" thief standing at the gate. Jesus did not; He answered promptly. Penitent! if the Church does not know thy heart, Christ does! If the Church shrinks from recognising thee among the saved, Christ does not!

Secondly: Jesus did not upbraid. The Pharisees would. Many churches of this day would. If Christ had done so, we should not have wondered. But He seems to think that the man's conscience upbraided him enough. Penitent, the Church may upbraid thee; the Saviour will not! Having His smile, thou canst afford to bear their frowns.

Thirdly: Jesus did not impose any condition. What a host of conditions are imposed on penitent sinners by some churches! The Lord imposes but one. With Him, "Behold he prayeth," is enough. Penitent, if it has been recorded concerning thee, "Behold he prayeth," thou wilt surely hear the "response of mercy." 1. A lesson of warning against presumption. 2. A lesson of encouragement, against despair.—J. K. Jackson.

The Personality of the Word of God.

"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."—Luke 24:27.

A modern novelist has described the presence of a Greek Testament in the room of a man tempted to his undoing. How often does the mere presence of the Divine Word make itself felt till the Book becomes no more a Thing but a Person! A glance at it, and though time and custom and sin have checked the old feelings, they are at once unsealed. The volume is not dumb. It speaks, appeals, warms, solicits, in the voice

that floated along our dreams in childhood. It takes on an aspect sometimes terrible, as when it gleams like the flashing of a shield, sometimes tender as if it carried in it all the loving remonstrance of the past. The tendency to pass into personality characterises things that greatly command us. Wordsworth tells us that on his first visit to Switzerland, as he was hurried down the southern slope of the Alps, the woods, "decaying never to be decayed," the drizzling crags, the cataracts, and the clouds appeared to him no longer material things, but characters in an Apocalypse. It was by the force of this feeling that Wordsworth seemed able ultimately to transfigure and unsubstantialise the whole mass of earth. The blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus cried in the ears of God.

I. *The New Testament Is Not a Mere Book, Not a Mere Thing.* It is the Word of God, and to the Word of God there are attributed in Scripture the most tremendous energies of personality. Let us take them as they are given in the Book of Revelation. "And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

The Word of God is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. Is it not so with the New Testament? Wheresoever you place it, in whatever company, it is always judging and making war. We may neglect its warning and be deaf to its appeal, but it will not leave us alone. In righteousness it doth judge and make war, and it will go on judging and warning till we yield it the obedience it demands. How wonderful and thrilling must that moment have been when the angels of the Seven Churches each opened his epistle! Each knew that the epistle contained a judgment from which there was no appeal. Each had

confronted the various criticisms of the Church and the world. Each had probably judged himself very leniently. We all of us find our comfort in the conflicts of criticism, and are encouraged by those that take side with us to think we are right. The judgment came that was unerring and complete. What a moment it must have been when the thunderbolt burst upon Sardis! "These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead." The Church that had lived in the atmosphere of flattery suddenly knew that it had sunk out of life!

II. *And He Was Clothed with a Vesture Dipped in Blood.* Always this is the clothing of the New Testament, no matter how it may be bound. It is clothed in a vesture dipped with blood, and if it were not, it would not be worth the lifting by hands that have been cut and wearied in their conflict with a world like this. Whatever is true about the New Testament, it is true that if you take from it the message of atonement, of the garden where Love once lay bleeding, of the cross on which the Eternal was crucified, nothing is left. The cross is not only its heart and groundwork, but it meets you, however carelessly you look at it, even with the first sight. It is with it as with the Word Himself, there is no Christ recognisable but the Christ who has been crucified for us.

III. *The Word of God Goes Forth to His Triumph, Conquering and to Conquer.* It makes war in righteousness and for victories, and its sword will at last smite the nations that would not be won. The triumph of God's Word is sure. Whatever appearances may be from time to time, its "liquid texture can receive no mortal wound." The Church has often erred in not putting the Divine in the text and the human in the margin.

What is human is perishable, but in the text all is Divine and all must endure. The war is a long war, and it will have its vicissitudes; but at the worst the gates of hell, through which pour the legions of our spiritual foes, shall not prevail against it. We may have missed much of the meaning of the Divine, but there has been nothing to justify alarm as for the imperilled sovereignty of the Book. The new theory of the solar system did not dethrone the sun, did not rescatter the stars over the abyss of heaven. So to the end generation after genera-

tion will ponder over His Book, generation after generation will watch by His Cross. So it must be. He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, and His thoughts must reign till all rebellious thoughts are subdued and disappear. There have been times, and the times may come again, when only His hidden ones will feed upon His truth; but in the coldest, darkest hour the buried fire will rise up out of the soil in the midst of a frozen world that thought itself done with the conquering Word of God.—W. Robertson Nicoll.

JOHN

Incarnation and Modern Problems.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."—John 1:14.

I. *The Doctrine of God.* The soundest, shortest argument for the Being of God is Christ. God is in nature; but nature is dumb. "No speech, no language, their voice is not heard." But in the Word God has spoken. The Incarnation teaches Theism by teaching us more than Theism. God is something more than the constructor of this curious clock. What comfort do we get from the conception of an infinite brain? Add the Incarnation to Theism and we have peace, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." But does not my own nature teach me that God is good? Yes, but Christ corroborates the testimony of our moral nature. The avatars of India and the Apotheoses of Greece are only efforts of the mind to anticipate this great doctrine of Christianity. The sense of guilt and longing for reconciliation may have produced these myths. But that does not prove that the subjective state was a superstition. The ability to appeal to the historic facts

concerning the life of our Lord is the strongest confirmation of the truth of our religious instincts. We can proceed by way of philosophy and prove our need of a Saviour, and by way of history prove the fact of a Saviour who reveals the nature and fatherhood of God.

II. *To the Irreligious Thought of the Age.* That is marked by a tone of serious disheartened scepticism. Yet the positivist tries to keep his religion after he has denied his God. What he teaches as a substitute for the Gospel is taught by the Gospel itself, is the only form in which it is worthy of a moment's consideration. If he would worship an ideal humanity, he must take Christ. If he would see an example of "altruism" he must take Christ's atonement. But infidelity must go back to Christ or forward to despair. When a man has discarded the eternal hope in Christ it is not strange that he should ask "Is life worth living?" Christ or Pessimism, the gospel of hope or the gospel of despair, salvation or suicide are the sharp antitheses presented by modern thought.

III. *To Apologetics.* Applying to Scripture the argument of design, we

conclude that it was constructed on a plan which must have existed in a single mind before it was executed in the progressive publication of the separate books. The Incarnation gives to the Bible its unity. The Old Testament is a congruous body of doctrine culminating in Christ; the New Testament is a coherent body of doctrine culminating around the Person of Christ. The doctrine is woven in the very texture of the sacred books. How did this happen? The advanced thinkers will not ask us to believe that organisms grow by chance. The intelligence that built the world made the Bible.

IV. To the Doctrine of Grace. The paradox of the Bible is the severity with which God looks on sin, and the tenderness with which He regards the sinner. Is there any way in which this dual relationship can be brought into conspicuous pre-eminence? Yes, the Incarnation is God's testimony to His love for man and to His respect for law. He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The atonement is therefore based upon the Incarnation. Advanced thought a short time since founded the hope of the universal forgiveness on the fatherhood of God. Now it preaches that man is under law to an extent which makes it idle to speak of forgiveness. Sin and suffering are inseparable, they say, and thus those who preached a gospel of love without law, now preach a gospel of law without love. Liberalism does not know how to reconcile these ideas, and, rejecting the Incarnation, has rejected the only method of reconciliation.

V. To Religious Communion. A man may be a Christian who does not accept all the doctrines of the creeds. It is equally clear that a man who denies all cannot be invited to the Lord's table. Where then shall we draw the line? Here. The accept-

ance of this doctrine draws towards Christ; its rejection separates from Him by an impassable gulf. The man who worships the Lord Jesus as God, and gives Him the homage of his heart is a Christian, although he may not accept the Athanasian statement. The same principle determines our relations with Romanism. It is not necessary to abate any of our antipathy to her errors, but a church must not be refused a place in Christendom which holds the Incarnation and related doctrines.

VI. To the Fundamentals of Religion. Any religion which is to take permanent hold upon the world must offer a theory of the universe and tell me whence I am and whither I am going; must prescribe a code and teach morality; must stir the emotions and take hold of the heart; Christianity unites these three ideas in the Incarnation.

VII. To Practical Christian Life. The incarnate life of Christ stands in close relation to the development of Christian character. That development is gradual, and is concurrent with the study of Christ. And to study Him is to know that He is Divine. If we study the great principles which constitute His doctrine we hear the voice of one who spake as never man spake. So comprehensively, so minutely, so influentially. If we study His example there is that which proclaims His Divine perfections, and yet His human, helpful, imitable brotherhood.

VIII. To Christian Work in Relation to the Evangelisation of the World.

The book of Acts is the second volume of the life of Christ, the first being an account of all Jesus "began." The Incarnation, then, was but the beginning of a great career which is still in progress. It is Christ who is still doing the evangelisation of the world. This is the only true basis of missionary confidence, and the con-

tinuously fulfilling prophecy of the final victory.

IX. To Man's Place in the Scale of Being: correcting the depreciation of man by science and the exaggerated dignity conferred upon him by Pantheism. He is neither an insignificant atom nor God. The Incarnation shows his reconciliation, not identity with God, and his glorious and elect creatureship.

X. To the Purposes of God. We know not what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like Him. And He is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. The perpetuity of Christ's human nature is the guarantee of an immortalised personality. And our individual interest in Jesus will not prevent us sharing the enthusiasm we may rightly feel concerning the destiny of His Church. The marriage of God and man eighteen hundred years ago is but the prophecy of a day when the bells of heaven shall ring in the nuptials of a ransomed Church with her royal spouse.—Prof. Patton.

Ultimate Purpose of Reconciliation.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord."—John 1:23.

"To present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight."

I. The Ultimate Purpose of God in the Work of Christ. 1. In "present" there is possibly a sacrificial allusion (Rom. 12:1), or the more eloquent metaphor of the bringing of the bride to the husband by the friend of the bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27), or perhaps it means simply "to sit in the presence of." The reference is to the day of judgment (2 Cor. 4:14). In the light of that revealing day His purpose is that we shall stand "holy," i.e., devoted to God, and therefore pure, "without blemish," as the offerings had to be,

and "unreproveable," against whom no charge can be brought. They must be spotless indeed who are "without fault before the throne." 2. All the lines of thought in the preceding section lead up to this peak. The meaning of God in creation and redemption cannot be fathomed without taking into view the future perfecting of men. The Christian ideal of the possibilities for men is the noblest vision that can animate our hopes. Nothing short of this satisfies God's heart, for it has to be connected with "It pleased the Father." Nor will anything less exhaust the power of the reconciling Christ. His Cross and passion reach no adequate result short of the perfecting of the saints. We ought, then, to keep before us this as the crowning object of Christianity; not to make us happy except as a consequence of holiness. Nothing less should satisfy us.

II. The Conditions on Which the Accomplishment of That Purpose Depends. 1. Generally speaking, a steadfast adherence to the Gospel. "If ye continue in the exercise of your faith." This continuance is explained—(1) Positively, "grounded," i.e., built into a foundation, and "steadfast," as banded into the firm rock, and so partaking of its fixity. (2) Negatively, "not moved away," a process that may be continually going on, and in which, by some force constantly acting from without, they may be imperceptibly pushed off from the foundation, i.e., the hope evoked or held out by the Gospel. 2. Some plain lessons may be drawn from these words. (1) There is an "if." However great the powers of Christ, and deep the desire, and fixed the purpose of God, no fulfilment of these is possible except on the condition of our habitual exercise of faith. The Gospel does not act on men by magic. "He could not do . . . because of their unbelief." (2) It must be present faith that leads to present

results. We cannot make an arrangement by which we exercise faith wholesale once for all, and secure a delivery of its blessings in small quantities for a time after. (3) If our lives are to be firm we must have a foundation outside of ourselves. If my practical life be not built on Christ the blows of circumstance will make it reel and stagger. (4) This Christ-derived steadfastness will make us able to resist influences that would move us away from the hope of the Gospel. If we do not look to our moorings we shall drift away down stream and never know we are moving. Many a man is completely unaware how completely his Christian faith has gone till some crisis comes when he needs it.

III. A Threefold Motive for Adherence to the Gospel. 1. "The gospel which ye heard." Paul would have them recall what they heard at their conversion, and tamper with no teaching inconsistent with it. He also appeals to their experience. "Have these truths become less precious?" To us the same appeal comes. The word has been sounding in our ears since childhood. The "one thing" we know is not to be lightly abandoned. 2. This Gospel was "preached in all creation under heaven," whereas the heretical teachings only belonged to a class. All errors are transient and limited; but the Gospel can go into any corner under heaven. 3. "Whereof I Paul am made a minister, as being an evidence of Christianity; which indeed it is.—A. Maclaren.

Excellency of the Christian Atonement.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29.

I. Christ Excels in the Nature of

the Victim. 1. The faultlessness of the Saviour. According to Judaism the lamb of sacrifice must be a year old, and without a blemish. Thus Jesus went through the four seasons—the spring, summer, autumn, winter of existence, without receiving or inflicting injury. Without blemish in the inward life, without spot in the outward character. Many are without spot to men, but are conscious of being full of spots unto God. Jesus was without spot to God. 2. His Divine appointment. According to Judaism, the sacrificial lamb was to be brought up on the farm of the offerer; for this reason that it must cost some thought and pains, and consequently be something united to him by a tie of affection. And Jesus was a Lamb which God reared upon His own farm. "I was by him as one brought up with him," according to the Chaldee paraphrase. "I was nursed at his side." But He was not only "of God." He was God. This it was that imparted efficacy to His sufferings.

II. It Excels in the Efficacy of the Work. The Jewish sacrifices brought sin to remembrance; Christ's sacrifice took it away. 1. Look at Christ as bearing the sin of the world. But to bear it He must go under it. In the Old Testament to forgive means literally to carry. "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth (lit., beareth) iniquity?" Other gods pardoned. Jehovah carried sin; under the Old Testament in respect of covenant, under the New through Incarnation and imputation. 2. Christ bore sin away. "Christ hath wholly purchased us from the curse of the law" (Welsh translation). How? By fully paying. 3. Christ bore it away once for ever. The Jewish sacrifices had to be repeated; but Christ cancelled it once for all.

III. It Excels in the Area of Its Influence. The Jewish sacrifices availed for one nation only. Christ's

sacrifice is intended for the benefit of the world. 1. Sin, not sins; sin in its root, its deepest, bitterest nature. 2. The sin of the world. When the Great Western Railway was first made in South Wales, it was constructed on the broad-gauge principle; but the directors years afterwards judged it expedient to convert it from the broad gauge into the narrow gauge. In the history of the way of salvation, however, the contrary process was observed—the narrow gauge under the Old Testament, and the broad gauge under the New. 3. All the sin of all the world. According to Judaism, a sacrifice was not left for all sins, such as adultery, murder, Sabbath desecration—sins committed with a high hand. Whoever was found guilty of these was to be “cut off from among his people.” But the sacrifice of Christ covers all, not a single sin excepted.—
J. D. Jones.

Regeneration.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”—John 3:3.

The expression “born again” was political. Gentiles were unclean, and to become Jewish citizens had to be baptised, and so cleansed became sons of Abraham by a new birth. “Naturalisation” means the same thing. Finding the ceremony on foot, Christ takes advantage of it to represent the naturalisation of a soul in the Kingdom of Heaven; taking water as the symbol, and the Spirit as the real cleansing power.

I. Christ Requires of All Some Great and Important Change as the Necessary Condition of Their Salvation.

1. Not, of course, of those who are already subjects of it, and many

are so from their earliest infancy, having grown up into Christ by the preventing grace of their nurture in the Lord. But this is no real exception. Intelligence is not more necessary to our humanity than is second birth to salvation.

2. Many cannot admit this. It savours of hardness, and does not correspond with what they see of natural character. How can moral and lovely persons need to be radically changed? That depends upon whether the one thing is lacking or not. If it be Christ’s love will not modify His requirement.

3. Christianity is based upon the fact of this necessity. It is not any doctrine of development or self-culture, but a salvation. The very name Jesus is a false pretence, unless He has something to do for the race which the race cannot do for itself.

4. But how can we imagine that God will stand on any such rigid terms? He is very good and very great; may we not risk the consequences?

(1) It is sufficient to answer that Christ understood what was necessary, and there is no harshness in Him.

(2) Such arguments are a plea for looseness, which is not the manner of God. He is the most exact of beings. Is character a matter that God will treat more loosely than the facts and forces of nature? If He undertakes to construct a beatific state, will He gather in a jumble of good and bad and call it heaven?

(3) We can ourselves see that a very large class of men are not in a condition to enter into the Kingdom of God. They have no purity or sympathy with it. Who can think of these as melting into a celestial society? And if not, there must be a line drawn somewhere, and those who are on one side will not be on the other: which is the same as saying

that there must be exact terms of salvation.

(4) We feel in our own consciousness, while living a mere life of nature, that we are not fit to enjoy the felicities of a perfectly spotless world. Our heart is not there.

5. When we give ourselves to some new purpose of amendment, we do it by constraint. What we want is inclination to duty, and this is the being born of God.

II. *The Nature of the Change.*

1. Let some things which confuse the mind be excluded.

(1) There is a great deal of debate over its supposed instantaneousness. But a change from bad in kind to good in kind implies a beginning, and therefore instantaneous, but not necessarily conscious.

(2) Some people regard it as gradual. But this is to make it a matter of degrees.

(3) Much is said of previous states of conviction and distress, then of light and peace bursting suddenly on the soul. Something of this may be among the causes and consequences, but has nothing to do with the radical idea.

2. Observe how the Scriptures speak of it. Never as a change of degrees, an amendment of life, but a being born again, a spiritual reproduction, passing from death unto life, putting off the old man, transformation, all of which imply a change of kind. Had redemption been a mere making of us better, it would have been easy to say so. The Gospel says the contrary. Growth comes, but there can be no growth without birth.

3. Try and accurately conceive the interior nature of the change.

(1) Every man is conscious that when he sins there is something besides the mere words or acts—viz., the reason for them.

(2) Sometimes the difficulty back of the wrong action is conceived to

be the man himself, constitutionally evil who needs to have the evil taken out of him and something new inserted. But this would destroy personal identity, and be the generation of another man.

(3) Sometimes the change is regarded only as the change of the governing purpose. But it is not this that we find to be the seal of the disorder, but a false, weary, downward, selfish love. We have only to will to change our purpose, but to change our love is a different matter.

(4) Every man's life is shaped by his love. If it be downward, all his life will be downward. Hence, so much is said about change of heart.

(5) Still, this cannot be effected without another change of which it is only an incident. In his unregenerate state man is separated from God and centred in himself. He was not made for this, but to live in and be governed by God. When, then, he is restored to the living connection with God he is born again. His soul now enters into rest, rest in love, rest in God.

III. *The Manner in Which the Change Is Effected.*

1. Negatively: (1) To maintain that it can be manipulated by a priest in baptism is solemn trifling. (2) Equally plain is it that this is not to be effected by waiting for some new creative act. The change passes only by free concurrence with God. (3) Nor is it accomplished by mere willing apart from God. A man can as little drag himself up into a reigning love as drag a Judas into Paradise.

2. Positively: (1) You must give up every purpose, etc., which takes you away from God. (2) There must be reaching after God, an offering up of the soul to Him, which is faith. (3) Let Christ be your help in this acting of faith to receive God (see vers. 14-16).—H. Bushnell.

The Trinity in Salvation.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John 3:5.

It would appear as if this glorious chapter had been chosen for the Feast of Trinity, in order that clearly and definitely there might be put before us the distinction of the three Persons in the work of human salvation. The Father loves the world, and gives His only begotten Son (ver. 16); the Son comes into the world and is lifted up on the cross, in order that all who believe in Him may have everlasting life (ver. 15); and then in this work the Holy Ghost engages, Who implants the seed of everlasting life in holy baptism, and re-creates the soul in Christ Jesus. This is very comforting, and should give us a heart joyful towards God, since we see that all three Persons, the whole Godhead, is engaged in our salvation.

I. *The New Birth Comes From God.* Nicodemus was right: the miracles of Christ were to the beholders the undeniable credentials of His mission. "No man can do these works that thou doest," etc.

1. It was the recognition of Christ's power that brought Nicodemus to Christ.—John 2:23.

2. It was this that prepared him to receive Christ's teaching. Though he had not yet the courage of his convictions, he was of willing heart to hear Christ's words.

II. *The New Birth Is Given by the Lord Jesus Christ.* "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," etc. Christ answers the thoughts rather than the words of Nicodemus. He had come to inquire about this new kingdom, for which he was waiting—the terms of admission; but his thoughts were

rather carnal than spiritual, outward rather than inward. Christ teaches—

1. The necessity of Spiritual regeneration to entrance into the kingdom of God (vers. 5, 7). He shows in what this necessity lies (vers. 6).

2. Spiritual regeneration is difficult for the carnal to understand. "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"

3. And if this is difficult, how much more the mysterious nature of Him who had been in heaven and came down to be crucified? "How shall ye believe if I tell you of these heavenly things?"—mysteries higher than the new birth (vers. 13, 14, 15).

III. *The New Birth Recognises the Agency of the Holy Spirit* (vers. 5, 7).

1. The water of holy baptism is the outward symbol of this agency.

2. This agency, like the wind, is unseen and mysterious. Then the whole Trinity is concerned in our salvation. The Father certifies the work of the Son, the Son the work of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit witnesses in the human heart.

The Brazen Serpent.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."—John 3:14.

The difference between the Gospels and the Epistles is that between seed and flower. Christ gave men the seeds of truth, and left inspired apostles to develop them. Paul has been charged with inventing the doctrine of the atonement, but it is in this verse in germ. Notice here three analogies—

I. *In the Disease.* The poison of the fiery serpents was fermenting in the Israelites; that of sin is fermenting in us.

1. Men are sinners; a trite observation, but Paul devoted three

chapters in Romans to prove it. Our very righteousness is as filthy rags, and you may endeavour by moral improvements to wash them, but you can no more wash them clean than an Ethiop can his left hand by rubbing it with his right.

2. We are all sinners. There is no difference. Irrational animals come short of the glory of God; but men "fall short." The idea of a fall underlies all human history; hence culpability. Some men have fallen more deeply, but there is no difference in the fact.

3. All are under sentence of death. "Guilty before God," subject to penalty—death. The wages never fall below that.

4. Not only so, but we are polluted, morally sick. What brought death upon us wrought it in us. The venom of the serpents would assuredly terminate in death, in spite of all self or other help. We all sinned in Adam, but Adam continues to sin in us. Sickness is contagious, health never. The Jew transmitted his depravity, not his circumcision: you imprint your sin to your posterity, not your holiness. Each has to be regenerated anew.

II. In the Remedy.

1. Our salvation comes through man. The Israelites were bitten by serpents, and by a serpent they were to be healed. By man came sin; by man comes salvation.

2. Not only by man, but the Son of Man, one who in the core of His being is closely united to every other man. According to the ancient law, the goel or nearest relative alone had the right to redeem. Christ is the nearest relative any man can have.

3. The Son of Man Lifted Up. The tendency is to make the Incarnation the centre of Christianity: the Bible makes the Cross that. A glorious display of condescending grace was made at Bethlehem; but on Cal-

vary God and man were reconciled. Christ suffered

(1) With man in virtue of His keen sympathies;

(2) For man, in that He suffered martyrdom rather than forsake the path of duty;

(3) Instead of man, for He bore the wrath of God.

4. The necessity for our atonement. Not shall, but must. The "must" of ver. 10 indicates the necessity for a radical change in order to salvation; that of our text the necessity of an atonement on the part of God. Sin must be punished. God's righteousness must be upheld, and all its demands met.

5. Jesus Christ uplifted is now both physician and remedy to His people. The brazen serpent could only heal our disease: Christ saves to the uttermost (1) degree of perfection, (2) degree of continuation.

III. *In the Application of the Remedy for the Disease.* The Israelites were not bidden to apply poultices, but to look. You are not enjoined to improve yourselves, but to believe.

1. Through faith in Christ the sinner has permission to live. Two words are used in this connection; forgive—give for; remit—set free. These must not be confused. As Broad Church theologians contend every one has been forgiven, but in the first sense. God has "given for" man all that Almighty Love could offer. But men are only forgiven in the second sense when they accept God's pardoning grace.

2. By faith we acquire the right to live—this is justification and more than pardon, permission to live.

3. The power to live—regeneration.

Conclusion: 1. In Christ's days faith in everlasting life had become practically extinct. 2. Christ revived it, not simply teaching it, but imparting it.—J. Cynddylan Jones.

Christ, the Judge.

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."—John 5:22.

We are very familiar with many aspects of Christ—as the Sufferer, the Saviour, the Sympathiser, the King on His throne, and so on; but perhaps this particular aspect of Christ, Christ the Judge, may not be very familiar to you. Let us take up three points.

I. *Christ's Position on the Judgment-Seat.* I suppose the essential thing in the judgment is that our entire character and performances in this world will be subjected to a thorough revision, and our place in Eternity determined accordingly. And there is another element, perhaps, which is essential; it is that the proceedings are to be made public. But what I want to emphasise is, that on that occasion Jesus Christ is to be on the judgment-seat. We call it the judgment of God and so it is; but the Divine wisdom and justice will embody themselves on that occasion in the Son.

II. *And Now, Secondly, the Bearing of This on His Divinity.* There is no feature of the religious thought of the present day more conspicuous than the attention given to the life of Christ, and never since He was on earth has the life of our Lord been studied as in the present century. But there is a danger of being so occupied with what is human in Him as to see nothing else. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he reward every one according to his works." Does that strike you as the description of a mere man? He is going to judge the world. Can you conceive of a mere man doing that? Why, do we not all make a hundred blunders in estimating the value of our own conduct? But that day

there must be no blunders, because the issues are far too terrible, for one's station and degree in Eternity are to be determined; and I say that no one can or ought to decide who has not more knowledge and wisdom than any mere man.

III. *And Now, Its Connection with His Humanity.* The Son of man is to occupy the position of Judge on that day because the redeeming love of God revealed itself in His human form, and it is by that attitude and behaviour of thought that men are to be ultimately justified or condemned. The test by which it is to be decided who are the elect of the human race, fit to survive, and who are to be cast away, is their responsiveness or irresponsiveness to the redeeming love of God, revealed to man in Christ Jesus.
—J. Stalker.

The Reason of Faith.

"Ye also have seen me and believe not."—John 6:36.

I. The grand distinction of Christianity is that it makes its appeal to faith, and upon that rests the promise of salvation.

II. But this is the scandal of men. If we hold any truth by reason, perception, or on evidence what need of holding by faith? And if we hold it without such evidence what is belief, but a surrender of our proper intelligence?

III. It is proposed to show how it is that we, as intelligent beings, are called to believe, and how, as sinners, we can in the nature of things, be saved only as we believe. This text sets us at the point when seeing and believing are brought together as not united; in verse 40 they are united.

IV. It stands on the face of the language—

1. That faith is not sight but

something so different that we may see and not believe;

2. That sight does not include faith or supersede the necessity of it, for after sight faith is expected;

3. That sight is supposed to furnish a ground for faith, and involving guilt when faith is not exercised. Let us look at three kinds of faith.

V. *Take the Case of Sight.* It has been a great question how it is we perceive objects. Berkeley denied that we saw them at all. The persons who saw Christ had only certain pictures cast in the back of the eye which were mere subjective impressions. How then do we bridge the gulf between sensations and their objects; how is it that, having a true picture in the back of the eye, we make it a tree? Some deny the possibility of any solution; but the best solutions conceive the soul to take these forms as more than objects perceived, that we complete sensation or issue it in perception by assigning reality to the distant object. What is this but the exercise of a sense faith? We thus see by faith.

VI. *Take That Faith Which, After Perception Is Completed, Assigns Truth to the Things Seen, and Takes Them to Be Historic Verities.* Thus after Christ had been seen in the facts of His life, it became a question what to make of those facts—whether there could have been conspiracy or self-imposition in the miracles. The mere seeing of a wonder never concludes the mind of the spectator. How many testify to having seen the most fantastic wonders, and yet they very commonly conclude by saying they know not what to make of them, doubting whether sleight of hand, ventriloquism, etc., may not account for them. The evidence to one who saw Christ was as perfect as it could be; but all that can be said is that a given impression has been made, and that impression is practically nought till an act of in-

tellectual assent is added. Then the impression becomes to the mind a real and historical fact, a sentence of credit passed.

VII. *We Come Now to Christian Faith.* This begins just where the last-named faith ends. That decided the greatest fact of history, viz., that Christ actually was. But what is now wanted and justified and even required by the facts of His life is a faith that goes beyond the mere evidence of proportional verities, viz., the faith of a transaction; and Christian faith is the act of trust by which one being, a sinner, commits herself to another Being, a Saviour. In this faith—

1. Everything is presupposed that makes the act intelligent and rational. That Christ was what He declared Himself to be and can do what He offered to do, and that we can commit ourselves to Him.

2. The matters included in this act are the surrender of our mere self-care, the ceasing to live from our point of separated will, a complete admission of the mind of Christ, a consenting to live as infolded in His spirit.

3. Great results will follow.

- (1) The believer will be as one possessed by Christ, created anew in Christ Jesus.

- (2) New evidence will be created. As in trying a physician new evidence is obtained from the successful management of the disease, so the soul that trusts itself to Christ knows Him with a new kind of knowledge; has the witness in himself.

Lessons. 1. The mistake is here corrected that the Gospel is a theorem to be thought out and not a new premiss of fact communicated by God to be received of men in all the three-fold gradations of faith. 2. We discover that the requirement of faith, as a condition of salvation, is not arbitrary but essential for deliverance from sin. What we want is God,

to be united to Him and thus to be quickened, raised, made partakers of the Divine Nature. 3. We perceive that mere impressions can never amount to faith, inasmuch as it is the commitment of our being to the Being of Christ our Saviour. 4. It is plain that what is wanted in the Christian world is more faith. We dabble too much in reason. We shall never recover the true apostolic energy without it.—H. Bushnell.

Difficulties of Disbelief.

"Lord, to whom shall we go?"—John 6:68.

1. Suppose we give up the Christian faith, what shall we have instead? Wise men are bound to look at consequences. If you were asked to leave your house, would you not inquire where you were to go? And are we to concern ourselves more about shelter for the body than a home for the soul? 2. It is easier to pull down than to build up, to spoil a picture than to paint one, to tempt a man than to save one, to ruin life than to train it for heaven. Infidels are doing this easy work, and to them we must put the practical question, Give up religion, and what then?

I. *Give Up the Idea of God? And What Then?* You would refuse to throw away the poorest covering till you knew what you were to have in return. Will you, then, recklessly give up the idea of the living, loving, personal God at the bidding of any man? Remember that you can put away the mystery of God, and you get in return the greater mystery of godlessness. The wax flower on your table was made, but the roses in your garden grew by chance, forsooth.

II. *Give Up the Idea of the Future? And What Then?* If a man asked you to throw away a telescope,

would you not inquire what you were to have in return? Will you, then, throw away the faith-glass through which you read the solemn and wondrous future? Christian revelation tells us that death is abolished, and heaven the goal of human spirits. Renounce this, and what can the sceptic give?

III. *Shut Your Bible? And What Then?* The Bible says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," &c.; the tempter says, "You have no thirst that you cannot slake at the muddy pool at your feet." It says, "God is a present help in time of trouble"; he says, "Dry your tears and snap your fingers in the face of the universe." It proclaims the forgiveness of sins; he says, "You have never sinned." It says, "In my Father's house are many mansions"; he says, "Your mansion is the grave; get into it, and rot away."

Conclusion: 1. Keep this question straight before you. 2. Inquire of the tempter his power to provide an alternative. 3. Be sure that the alternative is worth having. And you will find—4. That if you leave the Divine life and aspect of things, there is nothing but outer darkness.—Joseph Parker.

Spiritual Convictions.

"Being convicted by their own conscience."—John 8:9.

I. *Preliminary Distinctions as to Conscience Itself.* It may be considered as—

1. Ignorant or enlightened. The former, being vitiated by error or corrupted by prejudice, is an unsafe guide. It may condemn virtue and canonise vice. Hence the Jews persecuted Christians, thinking to do God service, and Christians have persecuted one another. But the latter, freed from corrupt influence and acquainted with the rule of duty, dis-

tinguishing between things that differ and approving those that are excellent, is a great blessing (Heb. 13:8).

2. Unnecessarily scrupulous or daringly presumptive. The former makes that a sin which God has not declared sinful, and is a weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; 10:12). The latter has no scruples, and bids defiance to the laws and vengeance of heaven (Deut. 29:19).

3. Pure or defiled. The one is purged by the blood of Christ from guilt, and is thus pacified; the other is contaminated by sin and lays no restraint on the appetites, nor reproves the motions of sin (1 Tim. 3:9; Heb. 10:22; 1 Tim. 1:15).

4. Tender or seared. The one is a faithful monitor and trembles at the Divine threatenings (Prov. 20:27); the other is free from all fear and too stupid to perform its functions (Zech. 7:12).

5. Peaceable or troublesome. The one conscious of pardoned guilt and mortified corruptions is one of the greatest mercies this side of heaven. It arms us against the most virulent reproaches and supports under the most agonising afflictions. The other is a worm at the root of all our comfort; there can hardly be a greater calamity (Prov. 18:14).

6. Natural and renewed. The first does not entirely neglect its duty, but performs it in an imperfect manner (Rom. 2); but the other fulfils its functions more perfectly. The conscience here spoken of is the former, awakened for a time and then falling asleep again.

II. Wherein Consists the Difference Between the Convictions Which Arise from Conscience and Those Impressed by the Spirit of God. There is a great difference in spiritual convictions. Some are sudden (Acts 2:37), others more gradual; some visible and violent, others invisible and easy, as in the case of the jailor and Lydia. But the distinction between

these and natural lies in such things as these.

1. Natural convictions respect only the guilt of sin, spiritual are attended with a painful sense of inherent pollution. The former are illustrated in the cases of Cain, Lamech, Pharaoh, Ahab, and Judas; the latter in the case of the Prodigal, Peter, and Paul.

2. In natural convictions the soul is actuated by slavish fear of temporal and eternal punishments. Persons may dread the consequences of sin, and yet be addicted to it. But spiritual convictions have a respect to the honour and love of God, hence "against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." Godly sorrow proceeds from this.

3. Natural convictions extend only to some sins, and those generally of a more gross and heinous nature, as the sins of Achan and Judas. It is true that the Spirit of God in conviction fastens some particular sin, often on the conscience; but He does not stop there, but leads to the corrupt fountain of sin in the heart and to those spiritual sins which are beyond natural convictions, pride, avarice, etc.

4. Natural convictions are temporary and vanishing, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Felix. The unclean spirit quits its abode, but not its claim, and returns with seven other spirits, etc. It is otherwise with the truly awakened. He not only lies under conviction, but yields to the force of it and acts permanently under it.

5. Natural convictions may consist with the love of sin. The legal convict is as much an enemy to real holiness as ever; but spiritual convictions are always attended with an abhorrence of sin.—B. Beddome.

The Blind Man's Creed.

"One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."—John 9:25.

1. A whole chapter is taken up with this poor man. This is unusual. Though an author be inspired, we can tell what he enjoys. An evangelist, as well as a Gibbon, betrays his interest and his sympathies. 2. In some unusual way the blind man was wrought into the plan of Christ's ministry. He had been born blind, and remained so that when Jesus passed by he might be ready to be healed by Him. All lives and events are wrought into that scheme. 3. The blind man was the first confessor. He was the sort of person that our Lord found it pleasant to do something for. He was ready to do what he could for himself, and what he could not do the Lord would do for him. Unlike Naaman, willingness was one characteristic of him, sturdiness was another. He spoke his mind at the risk of excommunication. His thoughts were distinct, and therefore his utterances were so. Crisp thinking makes crisp speaking. Let us look at his creed.

I. *It Was Short.* A creed with one article. Soon it enlarged, but it all developed out of this "one thing," &c. It is no matter whether a creed be long or short, provided a man believes it as this man believes his. What would a Christian be capable of if he so believed the Apostles' Creed? If a creed is believed, the longer it is the better; otherwise the shorter the better. Creed is like stature, it has to be reached by the individual, by slow growth from a small beginning. The vitality of a seed will determine how much will come out of it. Every fire begins with a spark. Some of us are trying to believe too much; not more than is true, or more than we ought, but more than we have at present inward strength for. We may extinguish a fire by putting on too much fuel.

II. *It Was Founded in Experience.* "I know I see." You notice how close the connection between the creed and

the confessor. His creed was not separable from himself. It was wrought in him, and so was one he could not forget. Whenever the sun shone or a star twinkled, he would feel his creed over again. We might be perplexed to tell what we believe if we had it not in print to refer to; but experience can dispense with type. We used to hear a good deal about experiencing religion; is the expression going because the thing is going? Christ works a work in me and I feel it. That is experiencing religion, although the feeling may be differently marked in different people. Even the truths of God to become my true creed have got to be reproduced in the soil of my own thinking and feeling. Faith is languid because experience is languid. The creed of your confessor began in one article, but it did not end there. Soon we hear him saying he believed that Christ was the Son of God. Our creeds have got to come out of our experience of God, and not out of our Prayer Book. That is a poor tree that looks and measures as it did a year ago. He is a poor believer who believes exactly as he did a year ago.

III. *It Was Personal and Peculiar.* Two living Christians cannot believe alike any more than two trees can grow alike. Two posts may. Two men only think alike, as they think not at all, but leave it to a third party to do it in their stead. Excessive doctrinal quietness implies lethargy. It is only dead men who never turn over. In nothing does a man need to be so loyal to his individuality as in his religion. This is what makes the Bible so rich. The inspired writers did not throw away their peculiarities. Each man's experience will be characteristic, and so, then, must his creed be that grows out of it. A man's proper creed is the name we give to his individuality when inspired by the Holy Ghost. Is it not

a splendid tribute to Jesus that we can each of us come to Him with our peculiarity and find exactly that in Him which will meet and satisfy it? There is only one Christ, but He is like the sun, which shines on all objects and gives to each what helps it to be at its best. No two alike, the sea not the forest, &c., but each finding in the sun that which helps it to be itself perfectly. The poor man obtains from Him just what he needs, and the rich man, the Fijian, and the Greek, &c.

IV. It Did Not Embarrass Itself with Matter Foreign to the Main Point. "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not." The point with him was that he could see, not how he could see. Sight does not consist in understanding how we see, nor health in understanding the organs of the body, nor salvation in knowing how we are saved. The physician can cure an ignorant man as readily as a scholar, because his medicine does not depend on the intelligence of the patient; so Christ can be the physician of all, because salvation consists just simply in being saved.—C. H. Parkhurst.

Victim and Priest.

"*I lay down my life.*"—John 10:15.

Types, like shadows, are one-sided things. Hence in the shadowy worship of Judaism Christ was brokenly seen in a variety of disconnected images. The sacrificial lamb was a picture of Him who is the first of sufferers and the only sin-bearer; but the dumb brute, led in unresisting ignorance to the altar, not otherwise than it might have been to the shambles, was no picture of the perfect willingness with which He devoted His life to God. For the type of that we must go to the white-robed priest. There was need for a double

shadow. But in the one real sacrifice the two are one. Jesus is priest and victim. There are certain steps we must take in comprehending Christ's self-sacrificing will as expressed in the text.

I. It Was Constant. The strength of one's will to suffer is tested by its deliberate formation and persistent endurance.

1. Our Saviour's resolution was no impulse born of excited feeling, liable to fail before calmer thought; nor a necessity for which He was gradually prepared, and at last shut up to through circumstances; but a habitual purpose, steadily kept in view from the first, till it grew almost to a passion. "How am I straitened," &c.

2. Many men are heroic only by impulse; give time, and the bravery yields to "prudence." Men have ignorantly taken the first step towards martyrdom; but, having taken it, have felt bound to go forward. But when the mind can form so terrible a purpose and calmly hold it on for years, in the face of unromantic neglect and mockery, the purpose must have its roots deep. Such will was never in any except Christ. Precious life, which carried its own death in its bosom, like a bunch of sweet flowers, filling all its days with fragrance.

II. It Was Actively Free.

1. While resignation was the habitual attitude of His soul, there was more than resignation. We underestimate His priestly act by thinking more of His willingness than of His will to suffer. "I lay down my life" means that, with ardent desire and fixed resolution, He is, at His own choice, giving away His own Spiritual Person including that which is the most personal thing of all—His will. And this active exposure to penalty accompanied Him through every stage. His was both the right and strength at every stage to free His soul; but He chose to go on deeper

into the darkness till all was over. This came out very plainly when Peter put before Him the alternative; when, His time being come, He set himself to go to Jerusalem, when He said to Judas, "What thou doest," &c.; when, on His arrest, He spoke about the legion of angels; yes, and when the torment reached Him, "Let him now come down from the cross."

2. Now, it is harder to will a disagreeable lot than to consent to bear it when it is laid upon us. Many a man has piety to submit to unavoidable evil, or even to rest in it as wise, who would yet be unequal to make it a choice. Most men, therefore, aim at nothing higher than passive acquiescence in suffering; but it is nobler to seal God's afflictive will with our own, and will not to have it otherwise. It is a further advance still to enter voluntarily into affliction for righteousness' sake. Yet even the martyr's choice of death before sin is less absolute and free than that of Christ.

3. *It Was Crossed by Hindrances from the Weakness of the Flesh, and It Overcame Them.* As you walk by the side of a deep, swift-running river you know not how strong the current is till you reach the rapids, where its flow is broken. So on reading the smooth, constant story of Jesus' life, there is little to tell us with what power He was advancing to His agony. Near the end came one or two places where this was seen (chap. 12: 27-29). That was a short struggle. His will to die soon overcame the momentary perplexity, and the voice from heaven was needed not by Him, but for the bystanders. This, however, was only a foretaste of the greater strife in the garden—the weak flesh against the willing spirit; yet in the end it is divinely upborne to bear the unimaginable suffering for the world's guilt. In that hour He sacrificed Himself—laid down His life. With what relief do we read, "It is

enough, the hour has come," &c.—J. O. Dykes.

Perseverance of Believers.

"I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
—John 10: 28.

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."—Romans 11: 29.

I believe in Perseverance because I believe in the Sovereignty of God, and I believe in the Sovereignty of God because I see it in history and experience. And thus I am persuaded that it is impossible for a true believer, since he is in the grip of God's purpose of grace, ever to fall away and at last be lost. It is Sovereign Grace that first moves us to repent and believe, and it will carry us invincibly through all weakness and disloyalty to the final consummation.

This faith is a splendid encouragement, yet it is open to serious criticism, and I wish now to consider the main objections which have been urged against it and to show that, as it seems to me, they spring from misunderstanding of the doctrine.

I. *The Doctrine, It Is Alleged, Is Contradicted by Experience.* Have we not all known men who lost their early faith and relapsed into irreligion?

Yes, and it would be a poor evasion to suggest that there never was any reality in their faith and that they did not fall from grace inasmuch as they had never been in it. My answer is that we must distinguish between falling from grace and backsliding. A believer, by reason of indwelling sin, is liable to the latter—witness David and Peter and all the saints in every generation; but, by reason of the faithfulness of God, he is ensured against the former.

When Cromwell was dying, he was

troubled. "Tell me," he said to a minister who stood by his bed, "is it possible to fall from grace?" "No," was the reply, "it is not possible." "Then," said the dying man, "I am safe, for I know that I was once in grace."

Yes, "once in Him, in Him for ever—thus the eternal covenant stands." This is theology, but it is poetry too, as all true theology is, since, as Boccaccio says, "Theology is nothing else than the poetry of God."

I cannot, I will not believe that any soul that has been pursued with importunate prayers and carried in faith's loving arms to the feet of Jesus, will at the last be an outcast from the Father's House. "Go thy way," said the man of God to Monica as she wept for her erring Augustine; "it cannot be that the son of those tears should perish."

II. It Is Objected That It Is a Perilous Doctrine, Fostering a Spirit of Security. What need to watch and strive if our salvation be assured?

This is a perversion of the doctrine, and it is nothing new. When St. Paul preached Justification by Faith apart from Works, there were some who said: "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound; let us do evil that good may come." "What does it matter," says the monk in Pascal's Provincial Letters, "by what way we enter Paradise? As our famous Father Binet remarks: 'Be it by hook or by crook, what need we care if we reach at last the Celestial City?'" And there is a sort of logic in this argument, but it does not stand the test of experience.

In the home of my childhood I used to watch the ships passing up the beautiful Firth, laden with the merchandise of far-off lands; and it was a brave sight as they came proudly into port with their white wings spread and their flags flying in the breeze. But once I witnessed a spectacle which touched my imagina-

tion and is still vivid in my remembrance. It had blown a heavy gale, and a hapless barque had been caught by the tempest outside the Firth. She was loaded with timber, and when the hold was full they had piled more on the deck, making her top-heavy. The gale smote her, and she capsized. She did not sink, for the timber kept her afloat; she simply "turned turtle," and swam keel uppermost. A flotilla of tugs went to the rescue and towed her in this poor plight up the Firth. When she got into shoal water, her masts touched the bottom, and the divers went down and cut them adrift. Then she was righted, and lay a dismasted, water-logged hulk. She got into harbour, but it was a pitiable home-coming. Would the crew have been content had they foreseen it? Would they have said? "Be it by hook or by crook, what need we care if we reach at last the harbour?"

And who would be content to reach heaven after this fashion—just saved and no more? For my part I would rather perish outright. I want "an abundant entrance." I want to sail into the harbour with my sails spread and my flag flying. And I am sure that it is thus that Christ would have it.—David Smith.

The Integrity of Scripture.

"The Scripture cannot be broken."
—John 10:35.

I. The Grand Principle Asserted. It is impossible to shut our eyes to the fact that a teaching is gaining ground whose fundamental principle is opposed to this and which affirms that the Scripture can be broken. It is of the first importance that we should distinctly understand the amount of authority which is due to the Bible. The Romanists say that tradition is of co-ordinate authority with the Bible; the Rationalists that only part

of the Bible is authoritative, and what portions are to be received as such is determined by the "verifying faculty." When Christ endorses, as He does in the text, the Old Testament, these philosophers affirm that He was liable to mistake and so overthrow His prophetic office and nullify His mission, which was to "bear witness to the Truth." But turn from theory to fact, and we find that Christ's affirmation is proved.

1. From the history of the Jews, who from their first settlement as a nation down to the present moment show in all their vicissitudes that the Scripture cannot be broken.

2. From the fate of heathen nations. Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and Sidon, &c., verify the predictions to the very letter.

3. The life of our Lord, every detail of which from Bethlehem and Calvary was detailed beforehand, and occurred "that it might be fulfilled."

II. The Basis on Which the Principle Rests.

1. That man's word may be broken. Why is it that friends and relatives in the slightest business transaction have a legal and written form? (1) Because man is changeable. That which he honestly and determinately promises to-day he may see reasons to change to-morrow, or he may change from simple fickleness. (2) Man is sometimes untruthful and deliberately false to his engagements. (3) Man is often unable to fulfil his promises and obligations, however willing he may be.

2. That for contrary reasons God's word cannot be broken. (1) God is unchangeable. "His counsel shall stand." (2) God is faithful. "God is not a man that He should lie." (3) God is able. These points are well illustrated in the promise to Abraham.

III. Application.

1. For comfort. (1) To the Church. In every age God's people

have been depressed by the taunt, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But God takes time to fulfil His word. Be patient, it cannot be broken. (2) To the individual believer. He has delivered in six troubles and He will deliver in seven. Past promises fulfilled are assurances that His word cannot be broken.

2. For warning. Though God's threatenings be long delayed for merciful reasons they will assuredly be fulfilled.—Canon Miller.

The Failure of Infidelity.

"Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing."—John 12:19.

Like the prediction of Caiaphas and the inscription of Pilate, an unconscious prophecy is hidden in these words. What the Pharisee affirmed hyperbolically Christ's friends may now affirm almost literally. Note—

I. *The Progress of the Gospel.* Four important facts concerning this progress are admitted by friends and foes.

1. That during the first four centuries it was rapid and extensive.

2. That its human instruments were few and feeble.

3. That it was in spite of bitter and persistent opposition.

4. That it was not achieved in the dark, but in the most enlightened age of antiquity, and in the most populous and polished of ancient cities. The company of one hundred and twenty soon became three thousand, then five thousand men alone, then multitudes in Jerusalem only. In less than half a century Christian churches were planted in all the chief cities of the Roman empire; in less than three centuries more, it was the religion of that empire. And from that day it has continued to spread until the most civilised nations are Christian and become Christian.

II. The Efforts of Infidelity to Stop That Progress. Such was the nature of the opposition to Christianity that if our standpoint had been the first instead of the nineteenth century we should be forced to the conclusion that it would fail.

1. The Jewish world opposed it. The rulers crucified its Author, but that effort was unavailing, for Christ rose again. They killed Stephen and James, but the disciples, driven in every direction, spread the Gospel. Wherever the apostles went the Jews stirred up the people against them; but being persecuted in one city they fled to another preaching until thousands of Jews, including many priests, became obedient to the faith.

2. The Gentile world opposed it. Polytheism was so firmly enthroned in the hearts of the people and so completely interwoven with the government, the arts and trade, that Christianity was regarded as treason against religion, the state, common sense and good taste. First, the Christians were slandered and ridiculed, then slaughtered in thousands. But all the efforts of the empire and paganism combined prevailed nothing.

3. The modern world has opposed it. Changing its tactics, infidelity, instead of assaulting men bodily, has assailed their minds and hearts, and marshalled its hosts under the banners of science and literature. But still it prevails nothing.

III. Why Infidelity Has Failed. The Christian answer is because the hand of God is in the progress of Christianity. The answer of infidelity—in human instrumentality—refutes itself. Infidelity has failed because—

1. It has dashed itself against the Rock of Ages. There is no successful arguing against such a character as Christ.

2. The evidences of Christianity are too convincing. Intelligent people would not continue for nineteen cen-

turies to use a remedy that never cures.

3. Infidelity has no substitute for Christianity.—W. B. Stewart.

The Attractive Power of Christ Crucified.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—John 12: 32.

Standing alone, these words might be understood to refer to the Ascension. St. Peter twice applies the expression to that event. But St. John explains the text according to our Lord's own meaning in chaps. 3:14 and 13:28. The Apostle has preserved the text for the purpose of enforcing his main theme—the Divinity of Christ, whereas the stress in the other Gospels is on the manhood, although neither side of our Lord's Person is overlooked by either. This general difference culminates in the picture of the Crucifixion. To the Three that is the lowest depth of Christ's humiliation, and their task is to train our sympathies with the perfect Man. But to St. John the cross is not a scaffold but a throne; not defeat but victory; not a repulsion but a world-wide attraction. If Christianity had come from man its chief attraction would not have been placed here, but to Christ on the Mount or beyond the stars. The wisdom of the Teacher, the prowess of the Conqueror, the majesty of the King would have been put forward, and a veil drawn over these dark hours. Instead of this, Christianity boasts of that which to human eyes must have appeared a failure. Twenty years after this prediction St. Paul echoes it, "We preach Christ crucified," and implies that that is the compendium of all Christian doctrine and morality, "I determined," &c. Wherein consists this attraction? In—

I. The Moral Beauty and Strength of Self-sacrifice. This fascinates because—

1. It requires a moral effort of the highest kind and commands admiration exactly proportioned to its intensity.

2. It is rare. The mass of men follow self. The majestic power of keeping well in hand the forces that belong to the life of nature is as rare as it is beautiful. As we admire gems and flowers for their rarity as well as for their beauty, so we are drawn to great examples of self-sacrifice.

3. It is fertilising. It is not unproductive moral beauty or energy run to waste. All the good done among men is proportioned to the amount of sacrifice employed. To witness sacrifice is to breathe a bracing atmosphere, and to be capable of it is already to be strong. All intense labour, and particularly that which is at the same time unrecognised or disengaged, is sacrifice of a high order. Such has been that of discoverers whose discoveries have been made public after death. Faraday's life was one example of disinterestedness and vast results of sacrificial labour. There are also lives in which sacrifice is pure suffering, undergone for a great cause or truth. The old pagans know how to appreciate, e.g., the deaths of the three hundred at Thermopylae. And who that has ever witnessed the welcome a man receives who saves a fellow-creature from a watery grave, or a burning house, can doubt the empire of sacrifice over every class in society. Our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That each gift of what is dear to self adds immeasurably to moral capital is a matter of experience. Wealth consists not in the abundance of things external to ourself but in internal possession, in the force and freedom of the will to do good. That is God-like and Christ-

like. Christ surrendered long before all that man cares for most, but on the cross He gave His life. Had He come amongst us without this mark, not doctrine, prowess or majesty would have drawn us to Him.

II. The Sufferings Endured.

1. Life is made up largely of pain of body or mind. Some have not begun to feel it, but all do before life closes. What account can be given of this empire of pain?

(1) It is a punishment—the advertisement that a deeper evil lies beneath.

(2) A purification.

(3) A preventative.

2. Still, an abstract doctrine in justification of pain is not sufficient to support us. We need the sympathy of a fellow-sufferer. Now, if Christ had come fenced in among all the comforts of life by a superhuman power, and, after teaching the true theory of pain, had died on a soft bed, He might have been honoured as a great teacher, but would not have drawn all men unto Him. As it is, He is the Universal Sympathiser. "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren." Therefore, after a life of varied suffering, He enforces His teaching by a supreme example of an excruciating death.

III. The Atonement He Offered.

1. The prevalence of sacrifice expresses a truth recognised universally by the conscience, viz., that man carries about him that which is offensive to the purity of heaven. The depth of the sense of sin is proportioned to the soul's vision of moral truth, which becomes clearer as the law of God is more clearly revealed. The law affords a standard of duty, but gives no means of realising it. Would, then, Christ have drawn all men unto Him had He only left the Sermon on the Mount? Nay, they who have felt the reproaches of the Decalogue would have felt more

keenly the reproaches of the Beatitudes.

2. Christ draws all men because He alone offers relief to this our deepest need. The Bible describes three forms which a sense of sin takes, and how Christ crucified relieves us from each.

(1) It tells man that sin is like a tyrant who keeps him fettered, and then points to Christ as paying down a ransom by His death.

(2) It tells us that since God is holy, sin makes God and man at enmity; and that Jesus removes this by an atonement.

(3) It insists that sin once committed is not like a vapour which melts away into the sky, but that it leaves a positive load of guilt behind it, and then it points to Jesus as taking this load and offering for it as a propitiation His supreme act of obedience.

3. Faith unites us with the all-sacrificing Christ.

Conclusion: 1. The Cross is the one real principle of unity to the human family. 2. To this common centre we are drawn one by one.—Canon Liddon.

The Loss of Faith.

"Therefore they could not believe."
—John 12: 39.

I. *The Temperament Which Renders Faith Impossible.* The statement is a strong one and is derived from Isaiah 6: 9, 10. This refers to no arbitrary act of Divine sovereignty. The Hebrews never conceived of a mere mechanical law, but regarded all sequence as a mode of God's power. And as overlooking intermediate cause they spoke of Him as making day and night, so they spoke of Him as making spiritual day and night. In the stolidity inevitable when the soul refuses the report of God's messengers and closes itself against the

light, they beheld law, and beholding law they discerned God. St. John dwells much upon cans and cannots (chap. 5: 19, 30; 6: 44; 3: 3), which refer to impossibilities which have their root in the presence or absence of certain dispositions; and the "could not" here implies the operation of a spirit incompatible with trust in Christ. The difficulty of verse 34 arose out of a state of mind impervious to Christ's manifest Divine life. Intellectual cavillings were allowed to intercept spiritual light, and so they could not believe. For the same reason many do not believe now. There is a type of mind which is often praised as a sign of intellectual smartness—disputatious, so constantly posing as debater or critic that the light which would illumine doubts cannot get into the heart. Such should deeply ponder the text.

II. *The Spiritual Inaction Which Involves the Loss of Faith* (vers. 42, 43). Compare this with chap. 8: 45-52. Only one then protested, now we learn that there was a considerable party in favour of Jesus, although prudential considerations prevented them from confessing Him. What was the consequence of their timidity? A few days after the hiding of Jesus, they were all with two exceptions implicated in the plottings which issued in the crucifixion. It is dangerous to delay the expression of conviction in appropriate action. Christ requires confession, and no peculiarity of disposition should hinder it. So-called reserved people run the risk of weakening their own faith and love as well as hiding God's righteousness (Psa. 11: 10). "He who is not for me is against me" (Rom. 10: 8-10).

III. *The Action in Which Faith Is Preserved and Perfected* (vers. 35, 36, 46; cf. Eph. 4: 15; ver. 13).

1. I believe and walk. The error of the people is that they stand still, putting their scruples between them

and Christ. His command is, Use what light you have; set yourselves in the path which faith in the light shall indicate (Hosea 6:3).

2. Believe that you may be the children of light. Not to believe is to pass into darkness.—J. M. Lang.

Sanctification Through the Truth.

"Sanctify them through thy truth."
—John 17:17.

I. *The Connection Between Sanctification and Truth.* 1. In the Old Testament sanctification is usually, although not always, external; in the New it is pre-eminently internal. The supreme self-consecration of the will of Jesus on the cross fixes the idea of Christian sanctity. Of this sanctification the instrument is truth. By "truth" Christ means a body of facts having reference to God and the highest interests of men. The truth differs from opinion in that it does not admit of contradiction, and it also differs from large districts of knowledge in that it refers to a particular subject matter. In one sense all fact is God's truth. Facts of physiology, history, mathematics, are parts of that body of facts which are in harmony with and issue from the Master of this universe; and the conquest of any one truth on any matter has a moral value. But no man is sanctified by the study of the differential calculus, or the spots on the surface of the sun as such; and unless he brings to those studies a disposition to study the Author of the universe through the works of His hands the result will be purely intellectual. But this disposition will make all research sanctifying. 2. It is important to insist on this connection between truth and high moral improvement in view of the idea that morality is independent of religious doctrine, and that,

consequently, what a man believes is of little importance. But can morality be in the long run obeyed, unless some doctrine be revealed as to the origin and authority of the law? No doubt the truth of the moral teaching of the decalogue is attested by the necessities of social life; but this is because the author of revelation is the author of society. But if morality had to make its own way, would it hold its own by virtue of those necessities? Here and there you might, no doubt, have real excellence divorced, if not from any creed, at least from the true creed—as in a Seneca, an Antonius, an Epictetus, but how would it fare with the people? Is it not, taking the average, the rule that a man's morality tallies with his creed? For what is moral excellence but good living, the proper government of the conduct, affections, and will? What is at the bottom of this? The sense of obligation? But obligation to what and to whom? This question cannot be answered in the same way by a man who does, and by a man who does not, accept the faith of Christ. A man who believes in a philosophy which makes man his own centre will have a different idea of morality from the man whose centre is God. The two, e.g., will conceive quite differently of such a virtue as humility. In short, human beings are so constituted that their moral improvement is bound up with the convictions they entertain respecting God and their origin and destiny.

II. *How the Truth Sanctifies.* 1. By putting before us an ideal of sanctity. The man of action, like the artist, needs an ideal. Outside of an ideal of sanctity. The man of action, like the artist, needs an ideal. Outside of revelation there have been such ideals, but they have been vague and varying, and have failed to supply the demands of even the natural con-

science. But in Christ we possess a perfect ideal of sanctity; and by giving the record of one life spotless and consecrated the truth affects thousands for good in degrees which fall short of sanctification; and it sanctifies those who, with their eyes fixed on this typical form of excellence, ask earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to take of the things of Jesus and to show or give them to His own. 2. By stimulating hope. It gives every man a future. Where there is no such hope sanctity is impossible. "I will be thy exceeding great reward." Spiritual work is its own pay, and the eternal reward is but the anticipation of the satisfaction which arises in doing it. But granting all this, He who made us knows that in our weaker moments we need that leverage of hope which His revelation supplies. The horizon of time is too narrow to supply any adequate object. "If in this life only we have Christ," &c. But let a man be "Begotten unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus," and he has with him a motive power which will make him at least desire to be holy. "Every man that has this hope in him," &c. 3. As being a revelation of the love of God. Love has a power of making men holy. Hence the power loving men and women have over the depraved. Now revelation is the unfolding of Divine love, and the measure of that love is the death of Christ. A revelation of justice may produce despair, but a revelation of love which respects justice takes the heart captive. "Sanctify" is the response which the heart makes to unmerited mercy. *Conclusion:* 1. This connection between the truth and sanctification is not a theory, but the experience of every Christian in some degree. 2. If we know anything of the sanctifying power of truth we should desire that others may know it too.—Canon Liddon.

Heaven.

"*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.*"—John 17:24.

I. Heaven as a Place.

1. It is a place. (1) This is suggested by our fundamental notions of things. We must look at our future existence to some extent in the light of the present. There is a real analogy between all the stages of existence of the same being. We find ourselves here inseparably connected with a place. We make mental and spiritual excursions even to the infinite and illimitable, but still we find our consciousness connected with a place. Locality enters into all our notions of the finite existences. They are, and they are somewhere. (2) This is suggested by the facts of many being now in heaven in their bodies, and of the general resurrection of the body at the last day. Enoch, Elias, our blessed Lord, and doubtless many more, are now there in their bodies. And we are taught that there will be a general resurrection of the body at the last day. It may be said that the resurrection-body will be spiritual. Yes, but spiritual not as distinguished from material, but from carnal and corrupt. In the light of the great facts of existence with which we are familiar, there is nothing unreasonable nor impossible in the doctrine of the resurrection. But, on the supposition that the body is to lose entirely its materialness, it seems indeed unreasonable and altogether unnecessary, and we ask what is the use of it at all? And we cannot see how a being who has lived, thought, felt, and acted in a material organisation could keep his identity in any state of existence entirely apart from such an organisation. And if the res-

urrection-body will be in any way material, then it must have a material locality and heaven must be a place. (3) This is plainly taught in the Word of God. It is taught in these words. And heaven is generally spoken of in Scripture as a special place. As a city, the new and heavenly Jerusalem. Christ speaks of it as his Father's house, where there are many mansions. "I go and prepare a place for you." So that the conclusions of reason and the teachings of revelation point to the same fact.

2. It is a place where Jesus is and the redeemed will be. "Where I am," etc. If so, we conclude: (1) That it is a most glorious place. It is the habitation of the only begotten Son of God, the express Image of his Person, whose glory on the mount transfigured his human nature and transformed the mount into a scene of Divine majesty. The place where he dwells must be unspeakably grand. The house must be worthy of the tenant, and the palace of the great King. (2) That it must be a very extensive place. To contain the hosts of angels which ever attend upon his Person, and the innumerable multitude of the redeemed—those given him by the Father, who shall be with him—such a vast throng requires a vast place. Although spiritual bodies doubtless will not require as much room as when in their crude and gross form, yet the place must be vast. (3) That it is a place where the Redeemer and the redeemed enjoy the closest fellowship. "That where I am," etc. With regard to believers on earth, the Saviour is physically invisible and absent; this is a hindrance to complete fellowship. But in heaven the Saviour and the saved will be locally and physically together, occupying the same abode, which will make the fellowship between them perfect.

3. It is a place the chief glory of

which is Jesus. In itself, its occupations and surroundings, it must be specially glorious; but its chief glory is Christ. As the place where he is, it is most attractive even to those who know most about it. Few, if any, knew as much of its local glories as Paul; but he had a desire to depart, not to be in heaven, as such, but to be with Christ. The chief inhabitants of a place form its chief attractions. Wicked people would soon turn heaven into hell, whilst good people would soon turn hell into heaven. People make a place, and not a place the people. The characters of heaven are all attractive, but Jesus is the chief one.

4. It is a place where Christ's glory will be fully seen. (1) His mediatorial glory. "The glory which thou hast given me." The glory of his Divine-human Person; the glory of his surroundings; the homage paid him at home; the glory of his complete victories and self-sacrifice; his glory in the redeemed, in their individual perfection, and in their perfect unity. (2) This glory can alone be fully seen in heaven. The glory of his Divinity, separately considered, can be seen everywhere in the works of his power; but his mediatorial glory can alone be fully seen where he is, and not where he is not. To see this he must be personally seen and be locally near. (3) This glory will be fully seen in heaven by the redeemed. "That they may see my glory." This is the purpose of his present will, that they may be in a position to see it fully, see it directly. The vision will be perfect, although gradual. Eternity will be fully occupied in its manifestation, and will not be a moment too long. It will be the reward of their service and the perfection of their knowledge and felicity.

II. *The Will of Jesus with Regard to Believers in Relation to Heaven.*

1. In its expression. "Father, I will," etc. He no longer prays, but

wills. He had prayed, and his prayers were really answered. He now expresses His will as one of the Divine counsels.

2. In its contents. "That they also whom," etc. This implied: (1) That Jesus would not be happy without them. (2) That they would not be happy without him. (3) That together they would attain the consummation of happiness and glory.

3. In its reasons. (1) The fact that believers are the Father's gifts. "Those whom," etc. Such tenants are more costly gifts than the place of their habitation. A suitable place for them naturally follows. (2) The manifestation of His glory. "That they may see," etc. What would be the Divine glory without appreciative eyes to see it, and what would be these appreciative eyes without the Divine glory in Christ? But both together are suitable. (3) The Father's love to the Son. "For thou lovedst me," etc. (a) This love is very old. The eternal Son could not remember its beginning. He knew that it was before the foundation of the world, and that it was the chief stone in that foundation; but it was much older in its origin. It was eternal; but the foundation of the world was a special era in its history. (b) This love is unchangeable. Jesus was fully conscious that He had done nothing to decrease, but rather to increase it. (c) This love is very effective. There is no place in the universe too good for the Father to give to the friends of His Son for the sake of this love—not even the most glorious place of His own presence.

Lessons. 1. The first thing in human happiness is a suitable character—faith in and union with Christ. 2. The next thing is a suitable place. That place is where Jesus is, wherever that may be. It is enough with regard to the locality of heaven. 3. A suitable character and place will be

perfection of bliss. 4. Let the character be prepared—heaven is certain. Christ prays for the former; He wills the latter, and respectfully demands it. 5. The present is a scene of struggle and preparation; the future will be a scene of enjoyment. The enjoyment of Christ's presence and service, and the visions of His transcendent glory. What visions await the believer in heaven! All our profoundest aspirations will be more than realised.—Benjamin Thomas.

Call to Communion.

"*Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast.*"—John 21:12.

I. *The First Thing and the Great Thing in This Chapter Is the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* "After those things Jesus showed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias." There must be the real Presence or there is nothing. Not a real presence in any awful mystery of bread and wine—that surely is unlike all that we know of the blessed Saviour. But we must know Him as our very Friend and Brother, as they knew Him of old. "Where Christ is there is the Church," said the great divine of old. Where Christ is, there, and there only, is the Sacrament.

II. *The Second Thought Is the Renewal of love.* "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou care for me?" Instantly Peter with heart on fire cries, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Again Jesus asks him, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou care for me?" Again he cries, more passionately, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." The third time Jesus yields to Peter and uses his own word. "Dost thou love me?" "Love thee? my Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Why, think you, is the

question asked three times? The answer is not far to seek. Because by that fire of coals in the judgment hall three times did Peter declare "I never knew Him"; and now three times should Peter look into that face and declare, "Thou knowest that I love thee." For every one of us this is the next thing. There comes the question, "Dost thou love me?" He

waits for the separate and personal reply.

III. *The Third Thought Is the Commission for Service.* "Jesus saith unto him, Simon, tend my sheep, feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep." Love can only satisfy itself in service. It cannot live in words only, it must clothe itself in deeds.—M. G. Pearse.

THE ACTS

Ascension of Christ.

"The day in which he was taken up."—Acts 1:2.

I. *The Fact.* Seneca said: "The ascent from earth to heaven is not easy." But Seneca was an atheist, if we may believe his adversaries. The atheist will not receive the witness of men. And Jesus said: "How shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The difficulties concerning supernaturalism are all difficulties of disbelief. To the mind of the believer there appears nothing that is difficult to Jesus in His miracles. The ascension of Jesus, like the resurrection or birth of Jesus, was only natural supernaturalism. It "was a necessary consequence of the resurrection," as it was the consummation of the series of His redemptive miracles. It was natural with Him; it would have been unnatural with His disciples. The time, the place, the nature and the witnesses of the ascension will corroborate the supernatural claim. The time was opportune. "After having lived a while on earth; after having offered his body as a sacrifice for sin; after having been raised from the dead; after having shown himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, then he led them out as far as Bethany, and in the presence of the whole Church then

collected together he was taken up into heaven." Equally interesting, fitting and convincing was the locality of the ascension. The nature of the ascension is evidence of the fact of the ascension. Jesus simply arose from the earth to go into the heavens. He had brought His body from the grave, and it belonged no more with corruptible things. It was not subject to the conditions or limitations of the earth. To go away was all that remained to be done. There was nowhere else to go but into the heavens. The witnesses of the ascension were not deceived, and could not be deceivers. They were the friends of Jesus. It accorded with their faith to expect that, like Enoch and Elijah, He should be caught up in the air. They were overcome with their sorrow when He was crucified. But now they had returned to Jerusalem with great joy. The angels who had announced His birth and proclaimed His resurrection were present to confirm His ascension. Stephen, when permitted to answer to the accusation of blasphemy in his apology, uttered in the very article of death, said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." And among his last words were: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And John, from the isle of Patmos, saw in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks the Son of Man,

whom he heard saying: "I am the First and the Last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." So also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath sent, is a witness. His presence in the hearts of men is the greatest witness. "He shall testify of me." If Jesus had not ascended the Holy Spirit would not be here.

II. *The Doctrine.* The ascension of Jesus was essential to the plan and work of redemption. It was necessary to relate again the work which Jesus had come to do in the earth with the world from whence He came. He had accomplished a virtual redemption. He was thenceforth to make it actual. It was prophesied that He would ascend on high, lead captivity captive, and receive gifts for men. He himself had foretold that He should go away. The ascension was the fulfilment of prophecy and the verification of His own words. Without the ascension the world could not have understood Him. It was the explanation of His character and work on the earth. Christianity was triumphant at the ascension. Sin was mastered, death was dead, and man was free. In the ascension of Jesus there was given to all believers the surety of their ascension. The heavens are now the pledge of another advent of the Son of Man.

III. *The Results.* There were both direct and indirect results of the ascension. The ascension was the dividing point between the Gospel and the apostolic histories. It concluded the one and introduced the other. The peasant becomes a prince. He is given a name which is above every name. He is returned to the honours which He had with the Father before the world was. The last act of Jesus as He ascended was to lift up His hands and bless. In the very sight of Gethsemane and Calvary, "with malice toward none and charity for all," He

went away blessing the cruel world which had received Him not, and dispensing gifts not to His friends only, but to the rebellious also. Of the great gift, in which all other gifts are included—the gift of the Holy Ghost which came on all men—we are all witnesses and partakers. The indirect influences of the ascension have been and are multifarious as the intellections and emotions of men. With the ascension the personal element of the Christ who had gone about doing good was taken from the earth, and it no longer excited malefactors to persecute Him. His disciples were exalted with Him. They were raised "into union and fellowship with a higher nature." The Father and the heavenly world were brought nearer and made dearer to the children of men. It is now the aspiration of all Christians to explore with the Son of Man the heavenly spaces.—J. W. Hamilton.

The Ascension of Christ.

"Wait for the promise of the Father."—Acts 1:4-8.

It will be interesting to note the reasons why Jesus did not ascend into heaven immediately after His resurrection from the dead, but remained forty days longer on earth. 1. He wished His disciples to know beyond all peradventure that He was not dead, but living, and alive for evermore. To this end "He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs." Whatever His disciples may have thought of Him previously, they must henceforth know Him as the Conqueror of death and hell. As to His Divine character and work, they could no longer cherish a shadow of doubt. 2. He desired to teach His disciples some things which hitherto they had been unable to receive. In particular He wanted them

to understand about His kingdom, to which they had previously attached all sorts of carnal notions. So it is written, "He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." 3. During these forty days He planned the campaign which is to result in the conquest of all nations to the glory of His name. We cannot place too strong an emphasis on the parting injunctions here delivered to the disciples—and to us—by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

I. "He commanded them that they should not depart from Jersualem, but *Wait*."—This was not an easy thing for them to do.Flushed with the memory of the glorious things which the Master had been revealing to them, they were doubtless in a mood to go everywhere proclaiming His kingdom. But return to Jerusalem, said He, "and wait." There were good reasons for this requirement. 1. It was proper that Jerusalem should be geographically the point of departure for the new order of things. "Salvation is of the Jews." "Go ye everywhere, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is the metropolis of redemption (Micah 4:2). It begins in Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, and proceeds to Rome, the capital of the world. 2. The disciples needed a season of mutual conference and prayer. To hasten to their work fitfully and each for himself would be to court despondency and failure. 3. They were to "wait" for a special preparation. They were not yet ready for their work. It pays to be well prepared for anything, most of all for the work of the kingdom of Christ.

II. Our Lord in this last interview with His disciples gave them, with renewed emphasis, the *Glorious Promise of the Holy Ghost*.—This was "the promise of the Father" (John 14:16; also 15:26). The man who imagines that he can set about the affairs of the kingdom of right-

eousness in his own strength will make a lamentable failure of it. Let him tarry at Jerusalem until he has received the promise of the Father. When the fire descends upon him, and he is endued with power from on high, nothing will seem impossible to him.

III. In this last conference of Jesus with His disciples He disclosed to them the *Plan of Future Operations*.—Had the attention of a passer-by been directed to the six-score or thereabouts who were gathered on Olivet on this occasion with the remark that these few working people—this feeble folk like the conies—were being organised for universal conquest, he would have pronounced it the wildest scheme that was ever heard of. Jesus not only gave the disciples to understand that He Himself was, through the influence of His ever-present Spirit, to take charge of the propaganda, but He issued clear and specific directions as to how it should be carried on. 1. For reasons already noted, they were to make Jerusalem their starting point. 2. They were to wait for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. This was to mark their initiation into the dispensation of the Spirit, or new order of things. 3. They were to proceed in their work with a clear understanding of the fact that their only power was from God. 4. The followers of Christ were to be "witnesses unto Him." Words in due season, spoken from the pulpit or anywhere else, are like apples of gold shining through the meshes of a silver basket; but a Christlike life is like a lighthouse on a rocky coast, multitudes are saved by it. All lives, indeed, are testimonies; every man on earth is lending his influence in behalf of truth or falsehood, for Christ or against Him. Character will out. Our creed is the thing we live by. 5. This witnessing must be universal. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and

in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." Observe, the disciples are not made responsible for the conversion of the world, but only for its evangelisation. They are to see that the story of redemption is told everywhere; and God Himself will do the rest.

IV. Then Cometh the End.—"He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The consummation of the Divine plan for the deliverance of our sinful race is to be signalled by the second coming of Christ. 1. When? "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power." This ought to be enough. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The appointed time is a state secret, and we cannot guess within a thousand years of it. 2. How? "In like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." In like manner His re-coming is to be a real personal advent. 3. What then? It behoves us to watch. Not to watch as do certain wiseacres, who lean indolently out of their windows with eyes towards the East, but as the Lord's faithful workmen, who have much to do and know that the husbandman may return at any moment. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"—D. J. Burrell.

Baptism of the Spirit.

"We shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."—Acts 1:5.

We do ill to brush aside the thought of the Trinity as a mere speculation of religious metaphysics. It is the most practical thing in the world. By it is measured not so much the distance between Christianity and other religions—that might be purely intellectual—but the difference between Christianity as a theory or scheme of thought and Christianity as a living

and potent experience. Have ye received the Holy Ghost? is a question in life rather than in theology.

I. Christianity, as It Appears in the New Testament, Is Identified with the Reception of the Spirit. Christianity itself, once emptied of this meaning and power, is as lifeless as Buddhism, and may become as corrupting. Some of the ancient Churches, from which the Spirit is withdrawn, the Syrian Church in India, the Coptic in Egypt, the Nestorian in Persia, are not only powerless, but seem to lie like an incubus on the populations. The Christian life, wherever it is real, means a freshening tide of life which flows like a river—and the river flows from under the throne of God. And this life of the Spirit, as it comes from the experience of salvation, issues in the salvation of others.

II. But as We Recognise the Very Definite Result, and Realise the Equally Definite Cause; as We See that Christianity Is a Spirit-filled Life, a life which begins, and is continued and ends in the Spirit, we cannot too resolutely set our hearts on that experience which constitutes all the difference between a dead and a living religion. Come, let us, like that man of a stout countenance in the Pilgrim's Progress, buckle on our armour and set our face to battle our way through.

III. And Now, What Are the Conditions of This Heavenly Baptism? They are the same conditions as those on which all God's gifts depend, Faith and Obedience. They are the simplest conditions possible, if the will is set on fulfilling them; they appear difficult and even impossible until the will is summoned to undertake them.

1. "He therefore that ministereth to you the spirit, . . . doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:5.) It is certainly by the hearing of faith.

2. But hand in hand with faith goes obedience. "The Holy Ghost,

whom God hath given to them that obey him," we read in Acts 5:32. Faith without obedience is illusion; obedience without faith is blindness. It is not so much an act as an attitude of obedience. To use an image, it is the soul emerging from the slough of self and planting a foot on the rock of the will of God. There are two wings on which the soul mounts to heaven, says the "Imitation," purity and obedience.—R. F. Horton.

Ascension of Christ.

"While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."—Acts 1:9.

The ascension of Jesus is a subject truly interesting to the contemplative Christian. It was the last link of that golden chain of events connected with the life and work of the Son of God upon earth. Notice, then—

I. *That the Ascension of Christ Was Previously Typified and Predicted.*—1. It was typified: by the entrance of the High Priest, with the blood of the annual sacrifice, once a year into the holiest of all: (Lev. 16:1; Heb. 9:7). The ascension of Christ—2. Was predicted. (1) By David (Ps. 47:5); (2) by Daniel (Dan. 7:13, 14); (3) by the Saviour Himself (John 20:17). "I ascend," &c.). Notice:

II. *The Circumstances Connected with It.*—1. The time of His ascension. Forty days after His resurrection. He remained so long among His disciples that they might be certain of His identity and resurrection; and that He might more fully instruct, qualify, and commission them for their great work. 2. The place of His ascension. Mount Olivet. Most of the important events in the life of Christ were connected with mountains. On one of these He delivered

His famous sermon to the people. On another was transfigured. On Mount Calvary, crucified. And now from Olivet He ascends to glory. 3. The circumstances connected with His ascension. He led His disciples out as far as Bethany, lifted up His hands, and blessed them; gave them, as His last act, an infallible sign of His love to them and His interest in them. He came to bless men; and all His acts were for the benefit of mankind. He retained the same benevolent feeling to the last, "For while He blessed them, he was parted from them," &c. Notice—4. The manner of His ascension. It was local, visible, real; as a proof of which, a cloud overshadowed Him, and on its wings He arose to the throne of God. 5. The witnesses of His ascension. The disciples saw Him ascend; and two angels attested the same fact. "While they looked up," &c. (Acts 10:11). 6. The place to which He ascended. The angels said He was ascended to heaven—to God's imperial palace—to the fulness of the Divine Presence. "I ascend to my Father," &c. "Far above all principality and power, even to the right hand of the majesty," &c. "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. "Thy throne, O God," &c. (Heb. 1:3, to end). Consider—

III. *The Grand End and Design of Christ's Ascension.*—1. He ascended to show that He had finished His mediatorial work on earth. He had fulfilled all the terms and stipulations of the covenant He had made with the Father (John 17:1-4). 2. He ascended as a triumphant conqueror over all His enemies. Purged our sins—blotted out the handwriting, &c.—spoiled principalities and powers, &c.—overcame death and the grave. And now, therefore, in triumph He returns to His native kingdom and throne. 3. He ascended as the representative of His people, and took possession of heaven on their behalf.

"I ascend to my Father and to your Father," &c. "I go to prepare a place for you," &c. (John 14:1-3). 4. He ascended that He might send down His Holy Spirit. "If I go away I will send the Holy Ghost," &c. (John 14:26, &c.; 16:7, &c.). He told His disciples to wait for this at Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). 5. He ascended that He might be the public advocate of His people in the court of heaven (Heb. 6:20; 7:25, &c.; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). 6. He ascended that He might exercise dominion and receive the homage of both worlds. "All things are put under His feet, and He is head over all things," &c. (Eph. 1:21, 22). He expects all the homage and service of saints on earth; and before Him every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, all the host of heaven fall prostrate, &c. (Rev. 5:9, &c.). 7. He ascended that He might receive to Himself the spirits of departed saints. Stephen commended his spirit unto Him. Paul also. He is the Lord of life and death, and He alone opens the gates of paradise and bestows the crown of eternal life.

Application: (1) Let us rejoice in Christ's ascension. (2) Let us place all our concerns in His hands. (3) Approach the Father only through Him. And (4) Look for His second and glorious appearance, when He shall come without a sin-offering unto salvation.—The Homilist.

The First Assembly of the Christian Church.

"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room."—Acts 1:13.

This assembly was marked by—

I. *Separation from the World.* The work was unworldly, and therefore separation was necessary. This separation was—

1. Local. Worldly business was not likely to come to the "upper room," as there were no attractions for buyers and sellers. Every Church should have a place of meeting set apart for its own use.

2. Mental. No worldly-minded man could have anything in common with their mental state. They were waiting for the bestowal of what no outsider had ever seen or heard. Does this mental distinction exist to-day?

3. Moral. They had given themselves up to be directed by Jesus. Such renunciation marks all true Christians. It cannot co-exist with the pride and self-sufficiency which mark unregenerate men.

II. *Unity.* The separation would not have answered its purpose without this. All present—

1. Recognised one Head. Attachment to a chief often unites men of varying gifts, tastes and ambitions. So high and low, educated and illiterate, &c., are united in Christ. The light of the sun illuminates planets of different magnitudes in various orbits, and each reflects the light of the ruling orb. So Christ is the centre of the Christian system, binds each member of the system to Himself, and freely sheds His light on all. Discord in a Church is therefore unchristian.

2. Had oneness of spirit. They all stood in the same relation to Christ, agreed in the exercises to which they were now devoted, and had grace to love one another. This oneness has often appeared where personal elements have been of very diverse kinds. Such unity in diversity is one of the beautiful effects of Christianity.

3. Were of one purpose—viz., to know, experience, and do the Divine will. For this end they conferred, waited and prayed. In the abolition of slavery men of opposite opinions, &c., were united by a common pur-

pose. Such union will ever be shown where men aim at Christian ends.

III. Confident Expectation. They persevered in the work to which they had given themselves. They had strong faith in Him whose words had brought and now kept them together. When that faith was tried by delay it bore the test. Continuance in prayer would increase the sense of power at the throne of grace; and this would intensify the longing for the promised blessing. This confident expectation ought to appear in all Christian assemblies, for there are Divine promises yet to be fulfilled.

—W. Hudson.

Revivals of Religion.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come." —Acts 2:1.

I. Their Nature. Religion in the soul is sometimes in a lower, sometimes in a higher state. The passage from the one to the other is more or less rapid. So in a community or church. There were periods of decline and refreshing under the Old Testament, in the time of Christ, in the time of the Reformation, in the time of Edwards and since. The phrase has now acquired the meaning of a sudden change from inattention to attention in regard to religion—to those seasons when Christian zeal is manifestly increased and converts multiplied.

II. Their Reality.

1. This has been denied—(1) By rationalists and all who deny the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. (2) By those who deny that the converting influences of the Spirit are ever exerted except in connection with the sacraments. (3) By those whose theory of religion does not admit of instantaneous or rapid conversions; who hold that the germ of piety implanted in baptism is, by an

educational process, to be nurtured into conversion. (4) By those who, while admitting the facts of the Bible on the subject, seem disposed to regard them as belonging rather to the miraculous than to the normal state of the Church.

2. But granting the fact of supernatural influence, there is no objection to the theory of revivals. There is nothing in them inconsistent with the nature of religion or with the modes of Divine operation. It is a question of fact, and both Scripture and history are decisive on the point.

3. In regard to the question whether any religious excitement is a revival or not, note—(1) It is, of course, not to be taken for granted that every such excitement is a work of God. It may be nothing but the product of human acts and eloquence, and consist in the excitement of mere natural feelings. Much, no doubt, which passes for revival is more or less of that character. (2) The criteria for the decision between true and false revivals and true and false religion are the same. (a) Their origin. Are they due to the preaching of the truth? (b) Their character. Is the excitement humble, reverential, peaceful, benevolent, holy; or is it proud, censorious, schismatical, irreverent? (c) Their permanent fruits. This is the only certain test. (3) Perfection is not to be expected in revivals any more than in the religion of individuals, and they are not to be condemned because of some evils.

III. Their Importance.

1. This may be estimated, proximately, in two ways—(1) By the importance of the end which they are assumed to answer—the salvation of many souls and the elevation of the piety of the Church. (2) Historically, i.e., by a reference to the effects they have produced. Pentecost, the Reformation, the Mission of Wes-

ley, &c. Estimated by these standards their importance is incalculable.

2. But there are false views of their importance, viz., (1) That they are the only ways in which religion can be promoted. Many expect nothing except during a revival, and consequently do nothing. (2) That they are the best way. They are great mercies, but there are greater. When there have been years of famine a superabundant harvest is a great blessing. But it had been better had each harvest been good. General permanent health is better than exuberant joyousness alternating with depression.

IV. Their Dangers. These may be learned—

1. From their nature. Excitement in proportion to its intensity in an individual or a community calls into vigorous exercise both the good and bad elements which may be extant. It makes the self-righteous, the censorious, the vain, more so. It sets men on new, unauthorised or improper means of promoting religion; and the evil elements often mingle with the good, so as to be far more apparent than the good. The desolation of storm or flood are often more apparent than their benefits.

2. From experience we find the following evils are apt to attend revivals. (1) False teachers, doctrines, measures, as in the apostolic age. (2) False views of religion, fanaticism. (3) Contempt of the ordinary means of grace and neglect of them. (4) Disparagement of religion in the eyes of serious, reflecting men. (5) Denunciation and schisms. (6) False views of the proper kind of preaching and neglect of the instruction of the young.—C. Hodge.

The Descending Spirit.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts 2:4.

Notice—I. Some Features of the Event Here Related.—1. It is interesting that the Holy Spirit should have been conferred at Jerusalem, the capital of the old faith. It is not God's way to inaugurate the new by any harsh abandonments of the old. The Christian is only the Jewish Church led forth into a new stage of development. As the two lay in Christ's mind there was no break between them. "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." It was suitable, then, that where the old Church had matured, the new Church should germinate. 2. It is impossible to say with exactness where in Jerusalem the disciples were gathered. It is barely possible that it was in some portion of the temple edifice. If that were the case it would only be in the line of what has just been said. 3. This first giving of the Spirit was at Pentecost. Still another proof of this is that God would like to have us consider Christianity as a graft upon an old stock. 4. As to the nature of the miracle. Was it a gift of "tongues," or a gift of "ears"? The most casual perusal is sufficient to convince that it was the disciples that were inspired to speak. The hearers were not in a mood to be inspired. The Holy Ghost works inspiringly upon those who are in sympathy with Him; and this these foreign residents at Jerusalem were not.

II. The Lessons Connected with the Event.—1. The Christian Church was born at Pentecost. The materials were already present, but standing out of organic relation with each other. It was the brooding of the Spirit that produced the formless elements of things into a shapely and prolific world. It was the inbreathing of God into the being of our first parent that developed him into a living soul. It was the influx similarly of the Divine Spirit that composed the disciples of Christ into an organised and living Church. 2. This was the

first Christian revival of religion. The Church was born in a revival, and the survival of the Church has been along a continuous line of revival. There is nothing in the whole New Testament narrative more startling than the transformation which the Twelve suddenly underwent on the fiftieth day after Calvary. A cultivated ministry and well-appointed churches are well enough in their way; they are suitable for the conveyance of power, but are not themselves power. They are to positive spiritual efficacy only what river beds are to the floods that are set to roll in them. The early Church, as compared with the modern, was poor in appliances; but one sermon then converted three thousand men, and now it takes three thousand sermons to convert one man. The difference between the times is largely difference of power. 3. The Spirit descended upon the disciples when they were together. The full meaning of Christianity is not exhausted in any relation in which it sets us individually to Christ. There are blessings that accrue to Christians only by their standing in fellowship with each other. The first Christian revival was inaugurated in a prayer-meeting. It is easy, and rather common, to treat prayer-meetings with disparagement. But it is generally found that when a revival comes it begins in God's revelation of Himself to saints that draw near to one another in prayer.

4. This first revival of religion began with the spiritual replenishment of those already Christian. It is time wasted, and runs counter to the Divine order of things, for a Church that is not itself revived to attempt revivalistic operations among the unconverted. Christianity, to the degree in which it extends itself, does so as a kind of contagion. The result of "gotten-up" revivals is only man-made Christians; and man-made Christians stand in the way of their

own conversion and add to the inertia of the Church. 5. After the Ascension the disciples simply waited for Pentecost. There was no further work that needed to be wrought in them before its bestowment. And we shall always receive the Divine baptism just as soon as there is nothing on our part that hinders it. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith," etc. 6. The Holy Spirit descended upon all the disciples. So far as we are Holy Ghost Christians, all substantial distinctions in this respect between the laity and the clergy are erased. 7. The Holy Spirit revealed Himself outwardly in the shape of tongues of fire. This was prophetic of the way in which revealed truth was to be disseminated. It does not suffice that men should simply live lives of Christian constancy. Christ not only lived, He preached. The first revival, then, opened men's mouths and set men talking. There is no place for silent Christians under the administration of the Holy Ghost. The pressure of God upon the heart inevitably finds escape at the lip.—C. H. Parkhurst.

Escaping Entombment.

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."—Acts 2:24.

The writers of the New Testament set forth the Resurrection of our Lord as a Fact, as a Doctrine, and as a Parable.

I. *Let Us Consider the Resurrection as a Fact.* The miracle of the Resurrection constitutes the keystone of the Christian position.

1. The first, and to my mind the greatest, proof of the Resurrection is the existence of the Christian Church itself.

2. The existence of the Christian

Sunday is another proof of the Resurrection.

II. Let Us Next Consider the Resurrection as a Doctrine. It is an article of faith in the creed of Christendom that we should believe in the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead. The Resurrection power of Christ has vanquished the tyrant Death, for is it not written, "Christ hath abolished death"? We know, since Christ has risen, that death is but an episode in life.

III. Lastly, We Consider the Resurrection as a Parable. The Resurrection of Christ mystically sets forth the eternal law that spiritual power, spiritual energy, cannot be holden of death, that it is impossible to entomb spirit.

1. We see this in the experience of the individual Christian.

2. We see the same great law at work in the history of the Church.—

T. J. Madden.

Christian Doctrine.

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship."

—Acts 2:42.

The New Testament was not yet written, yet there was a coherent system of Christian faith and truth, and by an instinct these people knew it. The truth had not yet been formulated into a creed, but the essentials of a creed existed in the minds of both preachers and hearers of the Gospel; and say what we may about creeds and the use which has sometimes been made of them, Christian doctrine is and ever has been essential to the integrity and the triumphs of the Christian Church. Note—

I. That the Christian Life Depends Partly upon the Soul's Conviction as to the Character of God.

1. This life is derived from God, and is developed in the soul. There

are inscrutable influences of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the inward change. There are also undefinable influences of godly friends or preachers, but none of these can be effectual unless there be a truth or fact through which the Holy Spirit works. How does a parent move his child towards a godly life? By force of character? Yes; but character is the product of Christian truth; and the parent was holy because, among other things, he read his Bible and believed his Saviour.

2. You might as well try to account for the life of a flower apart from the seed as to account for spiritual life apart from spiritual doctrine. You can predict the character of the flower from the nature of the seed; so from your knowledge of religious systems you can foretell the forms of character that will be developed from them—Mohammedan, Buddhist, Socinian, etc.; and our spiritual life will depend on the tenacity with which we cling to true convictions of the character of God. St. Paul was one of the most spiritual and self-denying of men, and again and again he traces his inner life to the power which Christian truth had over him—over his heart, of course, but over his intellect as well.

3. It is a shallow and often a hypocritical cry that asks us for a Christianity without doctrine. You cannot have it. God is—that is a doctrine. God loves you—that is a doctrine, and so on. Feed your mind on these and kindred facts, and yours shall be no puny life.

II. That a Christian Community Must Be Drawn Together by Affinities in Christian Doctrine.

1. If the unit of spiritual life depends for its existence and sustenance on truth, so does the community; if one child needs food, so do all the children; and though differences may be made to suit various appetites, yet chemical analysis shows that the foods

are the same in their primal elements. And all spiritual communions must find a common spiritual basis. Feeling is too shifting for this basis, conduct too indefinite, negation too cold and unsubstantial, ceremony too formal and outward, and those combinations which are formed by the sinking of convictions are immoral and hollow. No; the first requisite for Christian union is that there shall be a due regard to Christian conviction.

2. We sometimes talk of truth as though it were in the air, in documents, in the mystic utterance of the whole body of believing people. Yet ultimately it must be found in the individual soul. This is where error is, and not merely in magazines and lectures. A number of individuals, then, tenaciously holding the same beliefs, constitutes a spiritual community, and no Church is so destitute of the first principles of common sense as to seek fellowship apart from understood and common beliefs. The Unitarian may say, "We do not lay down any doctrinal basis for our fellowship," yet a preacher who proclaimed the atonement or Divinity of Christ would have but a sorry welcome.

3. Churches exist for the very purpose of proclaiming Christian truth. If truth has gone, their mission has gone, and thirsty souls will go to them and find no living water.

III. *That for Christian Doctrine We Are Dependent on Revelation.* God did not leave men to find out the truth concerning Himself; He revealed it. When He revealed it He did not leave it to take care of itself. Both the revelation and the record are monuments of God's special love to man. The idea of the supernatural is particularly obnoxious to "advanced thinkers"; they are consequently ever on the lookout for evidence that Christianity was only a product of the human mind, and so on a level with all other religions.

But Christianity professes to be a new and supernatural departure in the history of religion, and the apostles are the Divinely appointed media of the Divine revelation. Their "doctrine" concerns the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, and who so competent as they to deliver it, and who shall contest it as it comes from their lips or pens? Matthew was a chosen companion of Christ's; Mark was a convert of Peter's, and a comrade of Paul's; Luke had "a perfect understanding of all things from the first"; John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and "we know that his testimony is true." Peter was an eyewitness of His majesty, and did "not follow cunningly devised fables." To Paul the risen Christ appeared as to one born out of due time, and "he received of the Lord that which he also delivered" to his converts. If we want trustworthy guides, these are the men to help us.

IV. *That the Power of Christian Churches Lies, Amongst Other Things, in Their Adherence to Christian Doctrines.* If men want to be strong and aggressive, they must not be easily moved by the threatening sounds of modern unbelief; they must know their own minds and the mind of Christ. In moral conflicts convictions are the only forces that will do lasting service.—S. Pearson.

Conversion.

"Repent ye therefore and be converted."—Acts 3:21.

All through the New Testament one great saving change, involving entirely new relations with God on the one hand, and with sin on the other, is represented as indispensably necessary, and one only, and it is to this great change that we give the name of "conversion." The word, particularly in the original, seems to be a

suitable one to indicate it, looking at it from man's point of view, because it connotes a turning round and a turning towards, with a view to resting in. The word, too, in common use, suggests just such a radical change. We speak of "converters" that change iron into steel; of converting a sailing ship into a steamer, or an old-fashioned gun into a breech-loader. This great saving change is represented as the true starting-point of the spiritual life. It is therefore not a life-long work, for if all our days be consumed in making the start, what time is there left to that journey? The locomotive requires to be placed upon the turn-table, and to have its position reversed, before it can proceed on its return journey. But if the whole four-and-twenty hours are consumed in getting the engine turned, what is to become of that journey? And where is the station master that would be content to go on all day asking, "Is that engine being turned," or would feel content on hearing that the process was going forward?

I. *Conversion Is Closely Connected With, but Distinct from, Repentance.* Repentance represents the negative, conversion the positive, element. Repentance consists in the honest repudiation of the old, with the accompanying feelings of regret and humiliation; but conversion consists in the acceptance of the new, with all natural, spiritual exultation in God. Repentance is the discovery of the fatal disease and the mournful confession of it. Conversion is the appropriation of the remedy, the believing touching of the hem of His garment, with the firm persuasion, "If I may but touch I shall be whole." Repentance brings us down to the dust; conversion sets us amongst the princes and makes us inherit a crown of glory.

II. *Conversion Implies an Original Attitude of Aversion.* "An evil heart

of unbelief departing from the living God." And it is the presence of this attitude, more or less fully developed, that makes conversion necessary. Now this attitude is inherited from our first parents. Hence our position differs from theirs in this, that they had to fall beneath their created nature in order to turn from God, whereas we have to rise above our inherited nature to turn to God. Then, again, as it was by a definite moral act, an act of the will, that man turned away from God, so it is only by a definite moral act that man can be converted to God. And hence it is evident that no ordinances can render the conversion to God superfluous or unnecessary. This is surely a sufficient answer to those who allege that conversion cannot be necessary in the case of those who have been baptised as infants, unless they have lapsed into open sin. On the other hand, however, it must frankly be admitted that there are many of whose conversion there can be no reasonable doubt, who yet cannot remember in the past any aversion, and hence cannot point to any distinct conversion. They seem to have loved and trusted their Saviour so long as they could remember anything. Again, there are others who, although they can recall a condition of aversion, cannot point to the hour of conversion. This seeming indefiniteness with some, no doubt, arises from temperament, or perhaps to defective teaching. Anxious souls, who wish to come to Christ instead of being directed at once to the Cross, are told that they must wait for certain experiences. But whatever be the true explanation we shall do wisely in thinking less of the accidents and more of the essence of this great change. The question is not when and how did your conversion take place? but, Has it taken place?

III. *Must Conversions Always Be Sudden?* You hear not a few affirm

with sufficient dogmatism that they don't believe in sudden conversions except those on a death-bed. I must say, for my own part, that these are the only kind of sudden conversions that I am sceptical about. But my answer is not that all conversions are in their outward appearances necessarily sudden, but that there is no reason why they should not be so. If this matter of turning back again from sin and self to God can be settled promptly, none would wish to see it protracted; for it is only after this point has been passed that real religious experience begins. If conversion can be immediate, there is surely no sense in desiring that the process should be protracted. "Behold, now is the accepted time," etc. If conversion were one and the same thing as reformation, this might well require time, but if it be a mighty spiritual revolution wrought in man by the Holy Ghost, then it is by no means surprising that it should be completed as rapidly as Naaman's cure. Let us turn to our text.

IV. Conversion Is an Imperative Duty. The text is a direction couched in the form of a command. "Be converted." It may occur to you to object, Who can convert himself? If I am to be converted, it is God that must convert me. Now there is a certain sense in which this is quite true. The regenerating power can only come from God; but, on the other hand, man as well as God has his part in producing this great change, and it is to man's part in it that the word conversion almost invariably refers. Only once is the word used in the passive voice, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," etc. In that passage the actual moral change is referred to. And it is well that the word should thus be used once lest we should lose sight altogether of the necessarily close connection that must exist between the turning on our part

and the change wrought by God on His part. But in the present passage the word is active, "turn again." Many awakened souls are kept back from Christ because they cannot make themselves feel the great change that they think they ought to experience. They wait and hope and pray that they may be converted, instead of turning right round so as to face the God from whom they have turned away. Now to all such the voice of God through similar passages would seem to say, "Turn ye even unto me, saith the Lord."

V. Conversion Is the Correlative of Aversion. Now in this aversion three steps may be discerned. The first is taken in the aversion of the inner eye, the looking away from God; the next in the aversion of the will when we say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." We prefer to assert our independence; and then follows the aversion of the desires and affections. Now there are three corresponding steps in conversion. We begin to turn Godwards when we allow ourselves to recognise our inward needs, and turn from the empty cisterns that can hold no water, and confess. "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God." That may be called the conversion of the desires. We take our second step in the submission of our wills and our decision to yield ourselves to God, and here usually the struggle is the most severe, and when this point is gained the hardest part of the battle is won. But there is a third step, the conversion of our inner vision. For even when our desires are fixed on God and our wills yielded to God, seeking souls are still not infrequently kept in darkness just because they will turn their eyes to anything else rather than God. They will look at themselves, at their feelings, at their ill deserts, at their own faith, or rather at their want of it, at other people, and their experiences rather than at

God. Now when St. Peter calls upon us to turn right round and face towards God, it is in order that we may so fix our gaze upon God as to discover what there is in God for us, and rest at peace in the joy of that discovery. But it would be of little use to call upon us to turn unless such an object were presented to us as should attract and retain our gaze when once we direct our vision towards it. The thought of God and of His holiness repels and even appals the awakened soul. But here it is that we learn the value of the Gospel. It was not enough that Christ should bid us return to our Father; it was necessary that He should constitute Himself the way.

VI. *Thus We See the Connection Between the Atoning Work of Christ and Conversion.* The result of that work is that the sinner finds in God the very thing he has despaired to find in himself. Gazing on the Cross, he makes the astonishing discovery, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." Indeed, we may say that in the wondrous vision we find that which converts all our thoughts of God. He who gave His Son for me must needs be worthy of my confidence and love. "Look unto me," I hear Him say, "and be ye saved," and unto Him I look and find that there is indeed "life for a look at the Crucified One." And this look is conversion; for everything about that Cross seems of a kind to produce a change of thought and feeling that might be called a conversion. I love my sins, but I look at that Cross, and I see in the agony and death of the Sin-bearer what sin really is, and what it must bring me to if I cling to it; and thus my view of sin is changed. I looked upon many of my sins as mere trifles; now I see how exceeding sinful sin must be in the sight of Him who is its Judge, and thus my estimate of the gravity of sin is changed. I once thought of

God as though He were hard, austere, and unsympathetic; now I see how tender, as well as infinite, is His love. Thus my judgment of God is changed. I used to love to think of myself as my own master, but now I see what man is without God, and so my views of myself and of my relations to God are changed. Thus in turning myself to God I turn my back upon my old self. The old is passed away, left crucified on yonder Cross, and all things are become new. But more than even this. Not only am I changed in all my views and feelings, but I am converted to God; that is to say, I am restored to my proper relations with God. Between Him and me there is now nothing but love, and so I am now in a position to enjoy His fellowship and to be strong in His power.—W. Hay Aitken.

The One Saving Name.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—Acts 4: 12.

As one of the earliest preachings of the Gospel, this sermon contains a striking illustration of the *simplicity* of the Gospel message. From it we may learn what things were set forth as the primary and essential facts of Christianity, before the development of Christian doctrine. Theology is a science formulated by human genius; for it we are mainly indebted to Augustine and Anselm and Calvin. But it would be a sad thing indeed for the thousands of "wayfaring men," if an adequate apprehension of a human theology were essential to personal religion. This sermon deals with *facts*, with the *known* historical facts of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection; and with the *unknown* facts, declared upon the apostolic au-

thority, of Christ's office, commission, and authority, as risen and exalted. Upon these facts the sermon makes deductions and applications, as in our text.

I. *Salvation*.—Some have strangely suggested that by this word St. Peter only refers to *bodily healing*, and simply asserts that in Jesus Christ is the true miraculous power. But we cannot thus lose the deeper meanings and applications of truth. *Sin* is the great human ill, and salvation, to be any salvation at all to man, must deal with and compass *it*. For this sin that has wrought and is working in us we need "salvation," and it is but to mock us to say that Christ is not the Saviour from *sin*. Show what a large, comprehensive word "salvation" is; compare it with *healing, teaching, reforming, etc.* It is the word which expresses the deepest need to which any soul can ever awake. At the very edge of death the aroused jailor cries, "What must I do to be *saved*?" Plead as to whether there has yet been open vision to the discovery of this master-need. What, indeed, can it profit any one of us to gain the whole world, and have our soul unsaved?

II. *Salvation by a Name*.—1. A name stands for a person, and includes whatever rights may belong to him. Moses coming forth in the Name of Jehovah. So the apostles went forth, spoke and wrought, in the Name of Christ. And salvation is by the Name, i.e., by the present rights and power of the living Saviour, whom apostles introduced to men. 2. A name stands for a plea. As St. Paul used his name as a Roman citizen. The Name of Jesus is a sufficient plea to secure *acquittal*, for all due satisfactions have been wrought by Christ. The Name of Jesus becomes a sufficient plea to secure *acceptance*, for all required righteousness has been won by Christ; and we, by faith united to Him and

bearing His Name, come into His power and share His rights.

III. *Salvation Only by One Name*.—"None other name" is designed to be exclusive. Then see what it excludes. Few, perhaps, will now actually substitute something for Christ, and deliberately say, "I will not be saved by Christ." But there was, *in older times*, a subtle substituting of fancied ideas about God's *mercy*; and there is *now* danger of our substituting *knowledge and science*. Many will try to put something *along with* Christ. Men try to join their own name with Christ's; or they put together the Virgin Mary and Christ; or even, in subtle forms, the Bible and Christ; or feelings and Christ. All are wrong things if they are set in the *first place with Christ*; all may be good if kept in their proper *second places*. For soul-salvation there is only *one Name*; the essential thing is that we stand in living relations of faith and love with Him whose "Name is above every name."

IV. *Salvation in the One Name for All*.—Otherwise it could not be exclusive. If it is to be the *only Name*, then it must be the all-sufficient Name, or God would be deceiving us in permitting such broad and gracious invitations to be made to us. The real wants of men are common to all men. We all want health, love, knowledge, and truth; and it is equally true that we all want *pardon* of our transgressions, *liberty* from the slavery of self and sin, the *life* of righteousness, and the *hope* of the eternal glory. "Salvation" gathers up all these, and all these are found in and through Christ Jesus only.

Conclusion:—The way of salvation keeps its simplicity. And "to you is the word of this salvation sent." There is one Name—only one Name; believe, and you shall be saved. Search the world over and the ages through, there is no other; and yet one day to this Name "every knee

shall bow, and every tongue confess." —Robert Tuck.

The First Sin.

"*Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?*"—Acts 5:3.

There is an old saying, "The corruption of the best is worst." The better a thing is, the worse is its spoiling. The greater the elevation, the greater the fall. And this is true both of profession and of reality. When a man who has talked loudly is at length unmasked as an impostor, his exposure is more terrible than if he had never affected great virtue. And when a man who has felt the truth and power of religion is overtaken by the enemy, it is sometimes found that he gives himself over more entirely to the grasp of evil than one who had never known what it was to serve another master. We look upon this scene almost as we look upon man's original fall; we seem to be reading of a paradise regained, when we are suddenly shocked and startled by the narrative of a paradise for the second time forfeited. Observe from the narrative—

I. *That There Is Such a Thing as Acting a Falsehood.*—1. Ananias did not expressly say that the sum was the whole price. It was his wife who told an express falsehood. Ananias only gave it to be understood. We have to do with a God of truth, and where truth is not, there in His sight is falsehood. We often think that, if we can avoid saying the exact opposite of the truth, it is enough. Learn, then, that wherever deception is, there is falsehood. And how many of our words are "an attempt to steer dexterously between the truth and a lie"! 2. But, even beyond this, there may be an acted falsehood. Ananias, witnessing the honest self-devotion of others. He, too, will seem to have

counted all things but loss for Christ. Just as Barnabas brought the profits of his sale of land, so does Ananias bring his. Every one gives him credit, and he intends that they should do so, for a devotion which thinks only of things above, and a self-forgetfulness which cannot enjoy so long as others suffer. No word, it may be, is spoken, but the act itself says all this, and the doer intends that all this should be understood. Alas! how much of the conduct of many of us is indeed no better than an acted lie! How much is done to throw dust into the eyes of others as to our real motive, our real self! Even apart from the positive purpose of deceiving, how impossible it is to give others a true and just idea of us as we are! How does confession itself turn upon our lips into self-parade and boasting! It is so, perhaps, in mercy to others. We might draw others downwards if they saw how low are our own attainments; we might tempt them to acquiesce in imperfections against which God would have them struggle on in hope. God save us all from the falsehood of the tongue, and from the falsehood of the life, from the lie acted as well as from the lie spoken!

II. *What an Illustration Have We Here of "The Love of Money Is the Root of All Evil*—which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." What made Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Ghost? Was the lust of money the wish to save something out of the surrender of their all to Christ? Thus it was that they lost both worlds, even by trying to gain both! What is it but the love of money which creates some of the most characteristic evils of society? I speak not now of that honourable industry in the business of a lawful calling, which is as much the duty as it ever can be the interest of a Christian. I

speak of those precarious, adventurous, idle methods of gaining, upon which God's blessing cannot be asked, and upon which God's curse almost visibly rests. I speak of wants created by an expenditure habitually exceeding income, and supplied by the exorbitant profits of a single week in the year. I speak of examples set to the young of unlawful ventures, by which many a life has been drawn astray from the beginning, and many a hopeful career cut short by crime and infamy. I speak of a love of gain, which has made sons indifferent to a father's command and a mother's happiness, reckless in destroying the inheritance of sisters, and at last regardless even of a country's laws and the terrors of a wrath to come. Earnestly and affectionately would I warn the young of the fearful risks run by the first step into the region of chance.

III. What a Responsibility Is Involved in Being Brought Near to God as Members of His Church!—Well may this be recorded as the consequence of the fate of Ananias, that great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things. Yes, there is a reality in our connection with Christ which must tell upon us for good or for evil. These means of grace, these opportunities of worship, have a meaning, whether we will or no, and we ourselves are fearfully and wonderfully concerned in it. We must spend our lives, think our thoughts, speak our words, and do our acts, in the sight and hearing of God.

IV. How to Cast Out the Fear of One Another by the Stronger and More Impressive Fear of God.—Ananias and Sapphira committed this great sin in the hope of purchasing to themselves the good opinion of the Christian congregation to which they belonged. And they would have succeeded in this endeavour but for one consideration which they left out of

sight. They would have succeeded in winning the esteem of man if they could only have kept God silent. And we also are daily tempted to live for the honour which comes to us from one another, and not for that honour which is of God only. When shall we give up this fatal habit of asking at each turn, What does the world say? what does the world do?—my world, I mean—the world of my family, my friends, my neighbourhood, and inquire rather, Is this right? Does Christ approve? Let me look up to Christ for direction. Let the whisper of His Spirit be my voice of admonition. And let me in all things thank the Lord for giving me warning.—Dean Vaughan.

Definite Religious Teaching.

"They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch."—Acts 5:12.

What were they doing there? Worshipping—is the answer which used to be made; holding the primitive Divine service out of which have grown our liturgies. The unlikeness of this answer does not need drawing out. We shall most of us agree that the meetings of the groups of Christians in the Temple's cloister must have been for conference on the affairs of the community on some few occasions, on most occasions for instruction.

The scene can be reproduced with ease and with much assurance that our reproduction is correct. A visitor to the Eastern Mediterranean, when he traverses the court of a university or loiters in the vestibule of a mosque, and sees a cluster of scholars seated on the ground round the little platform of a teacher, and echoing after him the texts which the instructor drones out to them, can feel sure, in lands where the outward course of life seems not subject to

fashions or development, that the scene before him is a sound interpreter of the scene of Christians met with one accord in Solomon's porch. It is worth while to summon up to the eye, if we may, the spectacle of a Peter, a John, a Thomas, each with his score of listening faces in the rich dusk of the famed portico, because in looking on this we are looking on the beginnings of the Christian school.

I. Peter's Teaching Was, in Whatever Degree Dogmatic, Certainly Practical. In his speech at Pentecost, the dogma (as perhaps we may call it) of the Resurrection, "This Jesus did God raise up," has its practical result on the fate of men at once enforced: "He hath poured forth this which we see and hear"; and the hearers are called on to connect their fate with it; "Repent . . . be baptized . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So it is with the dogmatic teaching in Solomon's porch, his object-lesson of the lame man at his side "walking and leaping and praising God"; it is at once applied: "Repent ye . . . that your sins may be blotted out . . . that He may send the Christ." So is it in the house of Cornelius; "Can any man forbid the water that those should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" That is, the practical event of union with God in Christ has happened to them, therefore they are in the faith; their doctrinal position is true and adequate; give them the official seal of it.

II. Shall Not We Do Well if, Instead of Thinking First and Last of Doctrine, We Think First and Last of Human Fate? If, like Peter, we teach the doctrine, or fact from which the doctrine flows, not as itself, not as a proposition setting forth a particular event in the life of the universe or a general law in the world of things,

but as a fact in the life of our scholar, a law which will be illustrated by his personal destiny?

All of us must desire to make known in our classes a Christ who is in the heart: Who, whatever heavens must receive Him since His Passion, must, if He be a Christ, abide with us all the days and abide in each.

III. Then the Method, Peter's Method, Can It Also Be Ours? It can be, and no other can, if we are to do something more than teach a subject, if we are to convey a faith. We may expound the doctrine, as we must, in the terms of human fate and human will, illustrate it from human experience, and fire it with the zest of a man's interest in what happens to the man. But we cannot thus expound, illustrate, and fire our lesson by any other art than that which Peter used in the school of Solomon's porch. We also must be the thing we teach, have the faith within us which we communicate, believe ourselves the lesson we read to our class. It is not our lucidity as teacher, but our force as believer, which will write the record on the fleshy tables of their hearts.—J. Huntley Skrine.

The Man of Generosity.

"When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles."—Acts 9:26, 27.

Barnabas is one of those minor characters of Scripture who at once gain and lose by their proximity to a greater figure. He gains doubtless much from his relation to the gigantic figure of Paul, for it was in company with him that his best work was done. And yet, perhaps, he suffers more; for the friend with whom he walks

is so colossal that we forget all when we see him.

Barnabas suffers more than this. He is known as the man who quarrelled with the great Apostle. The two men differed about Mark and parted, so far as we know, not to meet on earth. The Bible says nothing of the right and wrong of that quarrel. It states the matter impartially, and leaves us to draw our own conclusions. But our sympathies naturally go with the man we like best, and Barnabas has had less than justice from the lovers of Paul. It has been said that he was weak and Paul strong, and that he was justly punished by his after obscurity. Or at best, it is said, both were wrong and both suffered.

For my part I take a different view. I think Barnabas was in the right in this quarrel. A study of the passages where he is mentioned in the New Testament will, I believe, show that, and show that his motives there as elsewhere were of a noble kind. These passages are mainly three. There is, first, his selling his land for the poor; there is, secondly, his taking the suspected Saul by the hand and introducing him to the Apostles; and there is, thirdly, his quarrel over Mark, where he insists on giving that unfortunate young man another chance.

These passages are all of a piece. They set Barnabas before us as emphatically "the man of generosity." The first is generosity of the hand; the second is generosity of the mind; the third is generosity of the heart. Let us look at these three generosities. They bring before us one of the finest types of manhood we can imitate—the truly generous man.

I. *Consider, First, His Generous Hand.* He sold his property, and gave it all for Christ.

The generosity of that deed is measured not by what he gave, but

by what he left. That is always so. Generosity is not a sum in addition. It is a sum in subtraction. A poor man's penny is more than a rich man's shilling. Christ sits over the treasury still, and to Him the two mites may be more than two sovereigns. Some of the most generous givers I have known were servant girls.

Barnabas is the man of generosity, not only because he gave much, but because that much was his all. Can you do that?

II. I Pass Now to the Second Phase of the Generosity of Barnabas—Generosity of the Mind.

It does not always happen that the man who is generous with his wealth is generous in his judgments of men. On the contrary, the wealthy giver is apt to be the narrow giver. He tends to become self-important and is therefore apt to be got at by men who flatter him or further his cherished nostrums. Anything, therefore, that is out of the line of his accustomed thoughts is suspected and frowned upon. Hence, not always, but often, a generous pocket does not mean a generous mind.

It is a beautiful addition to the character of Barnabas that his mind was as open as his hand. A strange convert has come to the disciples—the strangest ever seen.

Barnabas came forward. He took the young disciple by the hand, and gave him the weight of his influence—the influence of wealth and character. He told of his wonderful conversion, of his retirement into Arabia, where for two years he had been wrestling with the problem of redemption by grace. "It is not sudden at all," he said. "Accept him, I beseech you," he added to the leaders of the Church. "Believe me, he is a gift from God. Let not prejudice mar a chosen vessel" of the Holy Spirit."

That saved Paul, and when at An-

tioch a little later a new move was started, it was the same Barnabas who sought him out again, and put him to the work. He was the introducer of the Apostle of the Gentiles to his life's work.

III. Once More We See in Barnabas, Not Merely a Generous Hand and a Generous Mind, but Also a Generous Heart. He made allowance for the weaknesses of men.

This brings us to the most painful thing in his life—his difference with Paul. In his first mission tour he had taken so prominent a place that the Lystrians had called him “the King of the Gods,” while Paul was only his “chief speaker.” But now Mark has come between them. He had played the coward in that first journey, and gone home “to his mother”; but he was very sorry, and wanted to make amends for the past. “But, no,” says Paul—

He that will not when he may,
When he will, he shall have nay.

“Ah, but you must not be too hard,” says Barnabas. “Though he failed once, he need not fail a second time,” “I can’t help it,” said the great Apostle. “This is a difficult service. I must have reliable men.” “I will answer for him this time,” said Barnabas. “No,” was the reply. “It must not be. He won’t come with me!”

And the quarrel was so sharp that they parted, never in Scripture story to meet again. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and sailed into the world. Never again do we hear of him visiting the isle, where, tradition says, Barnabas laboured faithfully till he died.

Be generous in hand, in mind, in heart—that is the threefold message of Barnabas.—W. Mackintosh MacKay.

A Good Man’s Conversion.

“A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house.”—Acts 10:2.

I. God’s Word Treats All Men as Needing to Be “Saved.” It is interesting to notice how the language changes as the story runs on. In his vision Cornelius is informed that Peter “shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do” (chap. 10:6). When the man comes to relate it to others, he quotes it thus, “Who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee” (chap. 10:32). But Simon declares that what he had been sent to do was to tell Cornelius words whereby he and all his house might be “saved” (chap. 11:14). It becomes evident, therefore, that this centurion was as yet an unsaved man. And this is worth noticing, when we look at his character.

1. He was a thoroughly religious man (ver. 2).

2. He was prayerful. That is a great felicity which in the New Revision changes our tame expression into, “I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house” (ver. 30). It is likely that Cornelius had family prayers regularly.

3. Twice, also, it is stated that he was liberal in benefactions.

4. He was a useful man. There comes out a fact which is in many respects more impressive because of its artless form. His servants and orderly were religious. It might be conjectured that Cornelius had had something to do with the training of these people.

5. He was of good reputation among his neighbours (ver. 22). What could any one need more? Yet God’s inspired Word declares here that Cornelius was not “saved.”

II. God’s Word Gives Us to Understand That All Men Can Be “Saved.” Simon Peter is dispatched

on the errand of saving Cornelius. Just think, for a moment, of the disabilities of this man. If we should doubt anybody's chance, we should doubt his.

1. He was a heathen from Italy at the start.

2. He was a soldier. His daily life led him constantly to be in the barracks, and among the followers of a legion of loose homeless creatures whose lives were apt to be immoral. Still, we must be fair; there are four centurions mentioned in the New Testament, and each of them has left behind him a most creditable record. One of them Jesus commended for his remarkable faith (Matt. 8: 10). One of them bore witness to the divinity of the Lord Jesus on the Cross (Mark 15: 39). One of them was of much help and comfort to the Apostle Paul at what was very nearly the lowest point in his fortunes (Acts 27: 3). And this is the fourth one, and he certainly shows well. But war is a hard trade; piety in military life is pitifully like an alpine flower pushing up through the snow, and trying to blossom on a rock beside a glacier. And so it is the more beautiful when it succeeds in its pure purpose.

3. Cornelius was a government officer. That army of possession was in a sense political. It is natural always for the spirit of authority to generate arrogance; and true piety invariably demands humility and charity. As a matter of fact, it is known now that Palestine in those days was a hot-bed of corruption; the Roman officers oppressed and fleeced the conquered inhabitants unmercifully. All this was against Cornelius; he was once a heathen, military politician. But it is edifying to learn that even he could be "saved" (vers. 34, 35).

III. *God's Word Prescribes the Conditions of Every Man's Being "Saved."*

1. The two conditions which Simon Peter lays down plainly are faith (chap. 10: 43), and repentance (chap. 11: 18). There is a voluminousness in his argument that renders this quite clear.

2. It is of inestimable advantage for any teacher of the Gospel that he should surrender all other dependences, and rely only on the pure Gospel for the conversion of souls. It is manifestly of the highest moment that Simon Peter should have been intelligently informed, and now humbly possessed, of the doctrines of grace. We do not see how he could have made his speech and fulfilled his duty that day, if he had not felt precisely what the prophet Isaiah once said (Isa. 1: 4).

IV. *God's Word Settles the Conclusion That Even a Good Man, if Without Christ, Cannot Be "Saved."*

1. One may be aroused in conscience, and yet remain unsaved. Suppose Cornelius had been mortified, and wounded, and grown petulant, and so refused to obey the angel's command!

2. One may be diligent in religious routine, and yet remain unsaved. How exemplary this man appears to us now!

3. One may be virtuous in his life, and remain unsaved. Cornelius was "just" and "devout"; yet he was "lacking."

4. One may be counted excellent, and yet remain unsaved.

5. One may even be instrumental in saving others, and yet remain unsaved. Cornelius needed the whole Gospel still.—C. S. Robinson.

Sin and Salvation.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
—Acts 16: 30.

I. *To Every Man in His Serious Moods the Sense of Sin Is a Genuine*

Human Experience Which No Reasoning Can Reason Away.

1. It is not a remnant of savagery, but the sign of a spiritual nature; growing with our growing power of moral sympathy and insight.

2. The Christian revelation quickens and deepens the consciousness of sin. In the presence of Jesus Christ all our self-complacencies vanish.

3. The reality of sin is increasingly felt as we realise its consequences; how it darkens and disorders human life and human society. The sense of sin is a pain, but in such pain there is hope; it is the beginning of all redemption and all progress.

II. The Christian Idea of Salvation Is a Very Comprehensive One.

1. It is a certain severance from the shame and guilt of transgression. The sense of dissatisfaction with sin is not healthy in its influence unless it receives a hopeful interpretation and leads to a hopeful endeavour. It may also, according to our training, assume the form of a fear of God and the hereafter. But the removal of our distress concerning ourselves, and our ignorant and guilty dread of God and fate, is only clearing the ground for Christ's great salvation.

2. There is evil working within, and from its presence and dominion in the heart and life we need to be delivered. "What must I do to be saved?" is but a poor and petty cry when it only means, "What must I do to escape from the discomfort, the fear, the natural penalty of sin?" That is the cry of a man who cares more for his ease and happiness than for eternal truth and good. We are not to speak of being saved if we are not being saved from the sins we are tempted to commit daily.

3. Salvation is character and the perfection of character, the realisation of the ideal life for which we were created. The obligation is laid upon every one to come to his best.

and we are called not to repress but to cultivate all our human faculties. The saved man is a whole man, the full-grown, healthily and harmoniously developed man.

4. Salvation means a life lived not for self but for God. Religious selfishness is just as bad as any other kind of selfishness. Man's chief end is to save himself that he might glorify God, live for Divine ends, and give himself as the Lord did for the redemption of mankind.

III. How Believing in Jesus Christ Enables a Man To Realise This Ideal of Salvation. Christ saves not by any single method, but by whatever He was and is, did and does, by all the influences of His life and Cross, truth and spirit; saves not by any arbitrary and magical efficacy, but precisely to the extent in which He is known and understood, loved and obeyed; saves by inspiring right thoughts, right feelings, right motives; saves by giving new trusts, new hopes, new sympathies, new affections; saves by His revelation of the Divine mercy and by bringing men into direct communion with the eternal grace and power.

1. To believe in Christ as the revelation of God to man is to believe in redeeming mercy and grace, and to be delivered thereby from the fear which weakens and the despair which kills.

2. To believe in Christ is to have evil affections conquered and displaced by the growth of a new and holier and more masterful love.

3. In our Christian believing and loyalty are all the elements required for the development of the most complete and finished type of human excellence. To believe in Christ is to believe in ourselves, and to see in Him the man we are each called to be, ought to be, and can be; His righteousness is, indeed, our righteousness —ours to love and live. Faith in Christ is not a substitute for per-

sonal obedience, but it is vital with quickening power to make us obey as He obeyed. He changes character by imparting His own character sympathetically to all who enter into real sympathy with Him.

4. To believe in Christ is to be brought out of the circle of our selfish affections, aims, and interests into communion with mankind. His spirit is a social spirit, drawing and binding men together in mutual love and helpfulness, and, through individual influence, producing its effect on the families and generations of men, making possible and actual, as the text suggested, a Christian heredity. It is in the way of the spread and triumph of the Christian spirit we are to look for the coming of the Christian order of society, which is the second coming of Jesus Christ.—John Hunter.

Neglect of Reading the Bible.

"These were more noble than they of Thessalonica: in that they received the Word of God with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."—Acts 17:11.

If we are Christians, we believe that God spoke to the writers of the Old and New Testaments in a way by which He has spoken to no other minds however exalted. There is another light in which I think we are bound to regard the Old and New Testaments; and that is given us in a word used by the Hebrew historian Josephus, and constantly since his time. The word is "Theocracy," the special government by God Himself. God governs the whole earth, the whole universe; but in a special way, through inspired prophets, priests, and kings, He governed His people Israel, and prepared them for the full and complete knowledge of His truth.

If we do not study such a unique collection of writings with the utmost reverence and attention, where is our Christianity? "They searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so."

I. *That Was the Mind of the Apostles.* Every doctrine, every teaching of the New Testament is founded on the Old, and depends on it. "I came not to destroy the Law," said our Lord, "but to fulfil." To all the Apostles, to all the Christians throughout the New Testament, the written word of the old Sacred Oracles is the very breath of the spiritual life, the ground and confirmation of all their hopes, the sanction and authority of all their beliefs.

II. *That Is Entirely and Absolutely the Mind of the True Catholic Church.* That is the mind and habit of all the Fathers. If you ask what about the early Church after the time of the Apostles? Did they treat the writings of Christ's companions and Evangelists with the same awe and reverence with which Christ and His disciples had treated the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament? Nothing can be more absolutely certain than that they did.

III. *That Was the Mind of All the Great Councils of the Church.* Scripture was the standard of orthodoxy; Scripture the test of heresy. Every one of the Fathers who has left writings behind him proves every one of his opinions by appeal to the revealed word. When we come to our own Church, its view of Scripture is equally clear. If you ask in what spirit we are to apply the great and varied lessons of Holy Scripture, no two answers are possible to a Christian. From the time of the Fathers downwards it has been recognised that on the one hand there should be humble prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and great deference to the interpretations of the greatest theologians, on the other side a right

and proper use of Reason.—W. M. Sinclair.

Right of Private Judgment in Religion.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."—Acts 17:11.

The primitive preachers considered their hearers as capable of judging of the truth of what they heard. They not only taught the truth, but exhibited evidence to support what they taught, and encouraged their hearers to examine this evidence. This conduct of the Bereans was agreeable to common sense, and sanctioned by Divine authority. Let us consider—

I. *What It Is to Exercise the Right of Private Judgment.* It is the right which every man has of seeing with his own eyes, hearing with his own ears, and of exercising his own reason. But this implies—

1. A right to hear what may be said upon the subject. The Bereans had a right to hear the apostle's reasons in favour of Christianity before they received it or rejected it. We have a right to collect evidence upon any subject, from any who are able to give us information about it. And the more information men can collect, the better they are prepared to judge correctly.

2. A right to examine every subject for ourselves. Though many things may have been said and written upon any religious doctrine, yet we have a right to reason upon it, and to search the Scriptures to see whether it be there revealed or not. When we come to think seriously upon a subject which others have treated, we may find good reasons to

differ from them. They may have overlooked, and we may have found the real truth in the case.

3. The right of forming our opinions according to the best light we can obtain. We have no more right to judge without evidence than we have to judge contrary to evidence. We have no right to keep ourselves in doubt when we have sufficient evidence to come to a decision. "Prove all things," i.e., examine all things; and after examination, decide what is right.

II. *Men Ought To Exercise It in Forming Their Religious Sentiments.*

1. God has made men capable of judging for themselves in matters of religion. He has made them wiser than the beasts. He has endued them with the highest powers of reason and conscience, by which they are capable of judging what is right and wrong, true and false. As they are capable of judging for themselves, so it is their duty. Their capacity creates their obligation. As they are rational creatures, they are bound to act rationally. This, indeed, is the only power which they have no right ever to resign. They may, when necessary, give up their property or liberty; but they may never give up their right of forming their own religious sentiments, and of serving God according to the dictates of their conscience. They have no right to let their own depraved hearts, or the false reasonings of others, warp their understanding, and obscure the real evidence of Divine truth.

2. God has given men not only the proper powers, but the proper means of forming their religious sentiments. The Bible contains sufficient information in regard to all the doctrines and duties of religion. The Scriptures are level to every one's capacity, so that wayfaring men though fools cannot err therein, unless by prejudice, partiality, or blindness of heart. And since men have

this ample source of information in their hands, they cannot, without great impropriety and danger, neglect to search the Scriptures.

3. God has appointed none to judge for any man in respect to his religious opinions. It is true God has appointed teachers, but not judges; and after all they have done to exhibit and support the truth, the hearers are to judge for themselves whether those things they have heard be the truth. The Pope and all his hierarchy are usurpers, whose pretensions to infallibility are to be treated with disdain, as vile impositions. Christian churches have a right to form their own creeds and exercise their own discipline, independently of any superior ecclesiastical power on earth.

4. God has forbidden men to take their religious sentiments from others upon trust. His direction to His ancient people was to "the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." And we are commanded to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. And Paul tells the Galatians to reject any false doctrines, though brought to them by men or angels.

5. Every man must feel the effects of his own religious opinions, and consequently ought to exercise his own judgment in forming them. This is a matter of too much consequence to put out of his own hands. We must give an account of our faith as well as of our conduct.

III. *Improvement.* If it be the duty of men to exercise their private judgment in the manner that has been mentioned, then—

1. They may always know what they ought to believe and practise. God never places men in a situation in which they cannot know and do their duty; for then they would not be moral agents, nor proper subjects of moral government. Though

God does not require a heathen to search the Scriptures to know his duty, yet he is morally obliged to consult his reason and conscience to learn his duty, and to act agreeably to the dictates of these intellectual powers, which he knows he ought to obey. It is absurd for Christians, who have the Bible in their hands, to plead in excuse for believing and doing wrong that they could not know what to believe, or what to do; for they always may have evidence which makes it their duty to believe or not to believe, and to act or not to act.

2. They may not only know that they have acted right in forming their religious sentiments, but know that they have formed them according to truth. Many imagine because men may err in forming their religious sentiments that they never can know whether they have formed them right in any case whatever. But they have no right to draw this consequence from human fallibility; for though men may judge wrong in some cases, yet they may judge right in others. Paul first formed a wrong opinion of Christ, and verily thought it was a true opinion; but after he had formed another and true opinion of Christ, he knew that his present opinion was right, and his former opinion was wrong.

3. It may be greatly abused. Under the pretext of this right, men may take the liberty of judging very erroneously, unreasonably, and wickedly, as did the Jews at Thessalonica, under the influence of tradition, education and prejudice. Wherever the Gospel has been preached it has been opposed, rejected, or perverted by hearers, under the pretext of the right of private judgment. But though the right of private judgment has been, and still is so extensively and grossly abused, it is far better to tolerate it than to restrain it by any other means than those which are rational and spiritual.

4. We may easily see how those who judge for themselves on religious subjects, and with the same degree of light before them, may judge very differently. One may pay more attention to the arguments on one side of the question, and another may pay more attention to the arguments on the other side; or one may wish to find the truth in the case, and another, for some sinister motive, may wish not to find it.—N. Emmons.

Repentance.

"But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."—Acts 17:30.

Repentance is here urged as the command of the Almighty. In other places it is declared to be indispensable to salvation. Yet men have many objections. At one time they allege that they have done nothing which requires repentance. They have not been guilty of murder, or fraud, or falsehood. At another time it is said that repentance is wholly beyond the power of man; and wonder is expressed that a command should be urged to do that which will never be done but by Divine assistance. At another time it is alleged that the requirement is wholly arbitrary. Why has God chosen these mere emotions of the heart in preference to a correct moral character as the conditions of His favour? Again it is asked, why has God made the path to heaven a path of sorrow? Such are some of the feelings that spring up in the mind when we come to men and urge upon them the duty of repentance. My desire is to convince you that they are unfounded.

I. *Repentance Is a Simple Operation of Mind Understood and Practised by All.* You cannot find a person who at some time has not exercised repentance, and in the emotions of a child, when he feels sorrow that

he has done wrong, and who resolves to make confession of it and to do so no more, you have the elements of all that God requires of man as a condition of salvation. No inconsiderable portion of every man's life is made up of regrets for the errors and follies of the past. They invade the mind because we feel that we have done wrong, and that we ought to have done differently. They are not arbitrary. They are the operations of the regular laws of the mind; and they are operations which a generous and a noble heart would not wish to check or prevent. If such feelings actually occur on the recollection of the past, it is natural to ask why we should not expect to find them in religion? Further, the mind nowhere else knows emotions so overwhelming as in the recollections of past guilt. And why, then, should it be regarded as fanatical that the soul should be burdened with a sense of guilt when it comes back to God?

II. *God May Appoint His Own Terms.* This is true in relation to everything. Health is His gift; and He has the absolute right—a right which He is constantly exercising—to state to man on what terms it may be enjoyed; and if he does not choose to comply with those terms, God will not depart from His settled laws to give him health by miracle. In like manner, pardon is the gift of God, and He has a right to say on what terms it may be obtained. God is dealing with you in this respect just as you deal with your fellow-men. You will admit no one to your dwelling who does not choose to comply with the reasonable conditions which you may choose to have observed. You are a parent. A child violates your commands. Do you not feel that you have a right to prescribe the terms on which he may obtain your forgiveness? Even if the appointment were wholly arbitrary, God has

a right to make it, and man has no right to complain.

III. When Wrong Has Been Done Among Men, the Only Way to Obtain Again the Favour of Those Who Have Been Injured Is by Repentance. You are a father. A child does wrong. Towards that son you cherish still all a father's feelings; but you refuse to admit him to the same degree of confidence and favour as before without some evidence of repentance. You have had a friend. But he betrayed you. I ask any man whether he can receive such a friend again to his bosom without some evidence of regret, and some proof that he will not do it again?

IV. In the Actual Course of Events Under the Divine Administration It Is Only in Connection with Repentance that Forfeited Favours Can Be Recovered. I do not mean to say that repentance will always repair the evil of the past, but that if a man who has done wrong is ever restored to the forfeited favour of God, it will be in connection with repentance. A man has wasted his health and property by intemperance. Is there any way, now, by which health and domestic peace, and property, and respectability may be recovered? There is. But how? By this course. Why should it be thought more strange in religion than in the actual course of events?

V. The Necessity of Repentance Could Not Be Avoided by Any Arrangement Whatever. A moment's reflection will satisfy any one of this. The law of God requires love to Him as the supreme rule of life. That law man has violated, and the Gospel requiring repentance meets him as a sinner, and requires him to return to the love of God. Now no alienated man can come back to this love of God without regret that he wandered away from Him.—A. Barnes.

The Duty of Observing the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

"I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem."—Acts 18:21.

When our Lord came to be baptised He satisfied John by saying, "Suffer it to be so, for thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness,"—i.e., it becomes us to observe every righteous ordinance of God. The same spirit that animated the Master directed the conduct of His disciples; everywhere they were distinguished by a reverence for the ordinances of religion. And if there be an instance in which this spirit was more strikingly exemplified, we see it in the case before us. Surrounded as he was by the people of Ephesus, who entreated Him to remain among them for a longer period, He still felt the preponderating influence of the obligation to observe the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. I trust every heart here responds to the feeling of the apostle. A Christian will say, "I must by all means keep this feast," for—

I. It Is the Commandment of Christ. Were it a mere conventional ordinance, merely one of those outward circumstances which are not essential to the existence of Christianity, it might be left to our own discretion whether we should observe it or not. But it comes to us on the authority of the Saviour, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me." There is not any precept more explicitly laid down, and we cannot refuse to observe it without setting aside the authority of Him to whom we are indebted for all that we now are or hope hereafter to enjoy.

II. That I May Be the Better Warned of the Evil of Sin. There is in this ordinance a manifestation of the evil of sin that is not to be found elsewhere; for we commemorate that

great sacrifice which the Father required, in order to render the exercise of mercy to the penitent consistent with the exercise of His justice, in the moral administration of the world. When, therefore, the believer sits down at the table of the Son of God, and has his eyes turned to the Cross of Christ, his heart is smitten with a sense of the evil nature and destroying tendency of sin, and he feels that the world is crucified unto him and he unto the world.

III. Because It Is One of the Appointed Means of Grace. There is no feeling to which the heart is more ready to respond than our need of strength greater than our own for the varied duties and trials and sorrows of our nature. And God has promised that His grace shall be sufficient for us—that His strength shall be perfect in our weakness. But we must wait upon Him for this strength and grace in the way of His appointing (Ezek. 36: 37). We are not, therefore, to expect the blessing unless we employ the means. And the Lord's Supper is one of the appointed means by which the Spirit of God meets the believer, to renew, to sanctify, to encourage and to direct him.

IV. Because It Is One of the Most Direct Means of Uniting the Family of God in the Bonds of Peace and Love. At this table the rich and the poor meet together. There we learn to love mankind when we see that love which embraced the world. There we learn to forgive an enemy when we see Christ bleeding for His foes.

V. Because We Know Not That We Shall Have Another Opportunity. We are all dying creatures, and we know not what a day may bring forth.—J. Johnston.

upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.”—Acts 19: 1, 2.

This singular incident is remarkable as showing that in the apostolical age, as now, there were persons and bodies of persons in possession of fragments of revealed truth, yet altogether strangers to some of its most essential features.

I. Real Belief in the Holy Ghost Implies an Habitual Sense of the Reality of a Spiritual and Super-sensuous World.

If any one thing is certain about Christianity, it is that Christianity is an appeal from the visible to the invisible. Christianity is a constant appeal from the importunity of sense to the presence and action of the Eternal Spirit. Nay, it is more; for it presupposes a spiritual world of which nature and the better philosophy is cognisant; and then, it proclaims the introduction within this world of a higher power and principle which raises it above its original level, and thus constitutes the supernatural. Surely Christianity, as being strictly a supernatural religion, is *à fortiori* the religion of the spiritual; and yet how constantly does the empire of materialistic ideas force its way into the sanctuary of Christian thought.

II. There Is Such a Thing As a Materialised Estimate of the Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The idioms of Eastern speech, the scenery of the hills and lakes of Palestine, the flora, the climate, the customs of the unchanging East, all are summoned by the highest literary skill that they may place vividly before us the exact circumstances which surrounded the life of Christ. But here too often the appreciation of that life really ends. Men learn habitually to think

There Is a Holy Ghost.

Paul having passed through the

of Christ as one who belongs only to human history.

Now belief in a communion with the Holy Spirit rescues the life of Christ in the thought of a living Christian from this exclusively historical way of looking at it. For the Holy Spirit perpetually fulfils Christ's promise in the Church and in souls. "He shall glorify me for He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you."

The life of Christ is transferred by the Spirit from the region of merely historical studies, where it is appreciated only by the natural intelligence, to the region of spiritual experiences, where it speaks directly to the soul.

III. Belief in the Holy Ghost Rescues Us from a Merely Earthly and Materialised Estimate of the Christian Church. The Church is not a mere material corporation, but a spiritual society. Surely her indefeasible powers would only be put forth with greater energy when temporal succour was withdrawn; and it may be that she would gain in moral vigour, in clearness of faith, in intensity and unitedness of purpose, what she must have lost in the countenance of the powerful and in the wealth committed to her by past generations of her children.

IV. Once More, There Is Such a Thing As Materialised Worship, and this is a danger from which those who believe most earnestly in the realities of the kingdom of the Spirit do not always escape. Let us give of our best to the Churches and the service of our God, but let us ever remember that since, even in the realm of the Incarnation, He is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Surely to realise the presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul and in the Church is to be anxious that that communion with God which cannot be uttered in language should be more constant and

fervent; that the inner realities of worship should as far transcend its outward accomplishments as the kingdom of the invisible transcends the world of sense. Not to feel this anxiety is to be virtually ignorant of the meaning of the Spirit's presence; it is practically not to have heard, at least in one department of our spiritual existence, whether there be any Holy Ghost.

V. A Living Belief in the Holy Ghost Implies a Correspondent Elevation of Character. The Eternal Spirit has set up in the world a school of morals, and He whispers a deeper and purer code within the soul than nature dreams of.—H. P. Liddon.

Church Membership.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts 20:28.

I. The Claims of the Church. These are founded—

1. In the language of Scripture upon the subject of the Church. The Bible ever speaks of the inward as above the outward, elevates the power of godliness above the mere form of it, and tells us of at least one who, without baptism or the Church, went into paradise. Still, the Bible has some very strong language on the subject. Take the statement of the text. Can you imagine that that for which such a price was paid has no claim upon your allegiance? But take other testimonies (Isa. 49:15, 16; Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:22-27).

2. In the relation of Christ to the Church. It is true that there is much in the Church for which Christ gave no warrant. Church vestments and ceremonies, and the minute ramifications of Church creeds all come

under this head. As upon an old vessel, so upon the Church in her navigation of the Sea of Time, many barnacles have fastened, and these, so far from being a necessary part of the Church, do but oppose her power and impede her progress. But we must take Christ's idea of the Church. He called His followers out from among men into a special relationship to Himself and to each other. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." And by these words He constituted a Church. And this brotherhood, which He so organised in the world, He arranged to perpetuate, by inaugurating two rites, which, for all time, should separate His people from the world and bind them together in a compact and visible body. Now the Church being Christ's own arrangement, to reject it is to reject Him.

3. In the conduct of the apostles, who, under the direction of Christ, and in possession of the Spirit, at once set up the Church and began to use it as the school, the home, the sanctuary, of the disciples whom they called. That little band in the Upper Room was the Church. And no sooner did others, through their words, believe on Christ than they were formally added to this organisation (chap. 2: 47). And when Peter went to preach to Cornelius he baptised him. The believer in Jesus he enrolled as a member of the Church. So, when Paul kneeled to Jesus, he was also baptised. And so throughout all that early period. And shall any one in view of this fact say, "I will be a Christian outside of the Church"? The apostles knew of no such thing as a Christian willingly outside the Church.

4. In the fact that there is nothing so distinctly characteristic of the Christian life as the spirit of obedience. "What wilt Thou have me to do?" is the voice which comes out of the very essence of every Christian

life. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And here is the duty of Church membership, about which the Bible speaks most plainly.

5. In the principle that Christ gains men through men. This is in its widest sense the ordinance of preaching. And the widest, the most continuous, and the most forcible preaching, is by example. But how can we thus testify for Christ if we refuse to place ourselves in a Christian attitude before the eyes of the world?

II. The Objections with Which It Is Common to Meet These Claims.

1. There are in the Church many who give no evidence of Christian character. This is sadly true. But—(1) Christ never declared that His Church was to be a perfect body, but said that the tares would grow with the wheat until harvest. (2) Because another makes a mock of duty it is no reason why you should neglect it.

2. I can live a good life outside the Church. Perhaps so. But if your hope for eternity is in Christ, then to despise the Church is to despise the blood with which it was purchased; and surely no one can do this, and, at the same time, rest upon Christ for salvation.

3. I cannot agree with all the doctrines of the Church. But no Church makes the reception of all the articles of its creed a condition of membership. Trust in Christ for salvation and a Christian life, make up the one condition of Church membership. And what is there here which you cannot receive?

4. I am not fit to be a Church member. This—(1) May be a fact. There are those who are determined to live just as they please, without regard to Christ or conscience and who do not care what lies beyond. Such, of course, are fit only for membership with devils. In such communion they are even now. (2) May be a plea of simulated humility in

order to get rid of duty. The man says, "I am not fit," because he is not willing. (3) May be the expression of a true consciousness of imperfection. And here it is a mistake. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Conclusion: 1. The amazing character of men's indifference here. Christ says, "Behold my Church, for which I gave my blood!" And men pass the Church by without notice. 2. These are words of invitation. Again the Church, through the blood by which she has been purchased, speaks unto you, asking for your attention, for your allegiance. What shall be your answer?—S. S. Mitchell.

Receiving and Giving.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts 20: 35.

The few "words of the Lord Jesus" here preserved for us by St. Paul are his crystallisation of a truth which is as deep as the nature of God, which penetrates his whole creation and on which certainly Jesus' own life turned. It forms a key to the whole disclosure of the Divine character which lies open to us in the mission of the Son. Yet it needs no more than a very moderate knowledge of human society to discover that mankind at large acts on an opposite rule. That each should take all he can get and mind Number One are the commonplaces of worldly wisdom. Gladly to take, but to give with reluctance, is, as we say, human nature. At the same time there are certain deeper facts of life which prove this Divine maxim not to be at variance with true human nature, but only with the present unnatural state of human character. In order to see this it is needful to attend to—

I. What These "Words" Do, or Rather Do Not Mean.

1. They do not mean that it is an

unblessed thing to receive. God has made us all dependent upon His own giving, and also dependent mutually upon one another. We must receive before we can give, and whenever we begin to give some one must receive. The relation is blessed on both its sides. Service, therefore, like mercy, is twice blessed; "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes"; but of two blessednesses, saith Jesus, the higher is that of giving. Now, does not the human heart respond to this comparative estimate? Nearly all men will agree that the domestic relations form the happiest part of life. But this family blessedness turns far more on what we give than on what we get. The infant, for example, which receives everything and gives back nothing, has a blessedness infinitely feebler than that of its nursing mother. They do not mean that giving is more pleasant. Very often it is quite otherwise. Perhaps all giving means temporary loss and suffering. It is eminently so, at least, with the noblest sorts of giving, e.g., a mother's devotion to her child; yet her giving is more blessed than its receiving because it expresses nobler affections, trains her to nobler habits. I ask again, does not the world echo this thought of Christ's? In the articulations of society each one has something to give, and he must give it. But we count that man noble who gives to the general good the largest amount of costliest service.

II. *The Conditions on Which Giving Brings Blessedness.* These conditions may be summed up in one brief law—that the act of giving is only blessed when it is moral; and always blessed in proportion to its moral pureness and nobleness.

1. There is an unconscious giving. This mutual ministry of help pervades creation. Earth gives of her strength to feed her inhabitants, and of her hidden treasures to enrich them. The beasts lend to man their skill and muscle, and bequeath to him

their very bodies when they die. But it is needless to add that all this unconscious and involuntary exchange of benefits in dead or in brute nature brings no blessedness. A child knows that there is no real worth, nor blessedness, in any giving which is not the intentional act of a conscious agent, which is not, in short, moral. When the human worker is content to work like an animal in the mere struggle for existence his work may be ever so precious a gift to society, but he is no longer blessed in his giving, and—

2. There is reluctant giving. We make presents because they are expected; we entertain our friends that they may entertain us; we pay compliments for politeness' sake; we subscribe to charities under the constraint of opinion; we lend to our neighbour wishing he had not asked us. Now, to whatever extent the wish retracts what the hand bestows, to that extent giving brings no blessedness, because it is immoral in motive. It brings rather cursedness, both because it is to that extent false, wearing a show of charity which is not genuine, and because it argues a division of the man against himself.

3. There is a giving which is not simply defective through the weakness of charity, but at bottom utterly base through the want of it. It is a mean thing to oblige a man with a slight accommodation in the hope of extorting or coaxing from him a greater return; to pay courts to a great man, not from loyalty, but for the paltry vanity of being noticed, or the ignobler desire to profit by him; to use one's influence for an importunate suitor, only to get rid of his importunity; to give handsome sums to public charity that one's name may appear well in the advertisements. We must be simpler in our giving if we would be blessed in it. Evil is never so cursed as when it walks in the stolen white garb of good, nor

selfishness ever so unblest as when it mimics charity.

III. *Rising Above Human Giving, Let Us Gaze upon the Divine*—the ideal after which men are to be remade in Christ. God has this solitary pre-eminence in blessedness, that He gives everything and receives nothing. On this account, as on every other, His is the noblest life, because He is for ever imparting of His own to all and gets in return only what He first has given. It utterly baffles imagination to conceive what streams of reflected gladness must pour back upon the heart of the Infinite Lover from even one small section of the world which He has made so happy. The sunshine and the fields delight us sometimes for a little; they delight God always; and when we, with our love—and tenderness, sweeten each other's life, that adds more sweetness to the life of God. The rarest joy granted to man below is the joy of leading a brother into the light and love of our common Father; but He, our Father, has the luxury of leading all of us into light, of teaching every child He has to know at least a little of the truth and to love the good a little. God has tasted a still deeper blessedness. When God made all things good, or when He makes His fair world glad, He gives only as rich men give stray coins away, feeling no loss. But can God feel loss? or touch the mysterious blessedness which underlies the pain of sacrifice? For us sinful men and for our salvation, God has—so to speak—drawn upon the resources of His moral nature and expended not His thoughts, or strength, or pity only, but Himself. He left nothing ungiven when the Son gave Himself for us. Jesus' life was one of giving. Because He received so little from His fellow-men and gave them so much, His life reveals God. Just here there was realised the supreme blessedness of the Divine nature; for here the Divine

character realised in act its supreme nobleness. Down through the mysterious anguish of giving Himself away in utter loss, and pain, and death, the Divine heart pierced to a blessedness than which nothing can be more blessed, the blessedness of daring to die for the saving of the lost.—J. O. Dykes.

Conscience.

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."
—Acts 24:16.

I. The Keynote of the Whole Sentence Is That Word Conscience.

1. What is conscience? (1) A moral memory. Conscience has to do with the past chiefly. "This is twice living, to enjoy life past." On the other hand, "The first and foremost punishment of sinners is to have sinned." (2) A fellow-knowledge; a knowledge shared with another, and that other oneself; a man's privy to his own conduct, in thought and word and deed. I am so made that I cannot help this fellow-knowledge.

2. The word occurs more than thirty times in the New Testament, and of these more than twenty are in St. Paul's unquestioned writings. (1) It is to the conscience of man that he addresses his Gospel. "By manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Let each man's fellow-knowledge feel, as he listens to my gospel, that it is a word worthy of God and wholesome for man. "We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." (2) To his own conscience he appeals for testimony. "My conscience also bearing me witness." His own fellow-knowledge assures him of perfect truthfulness. (3) He speaks more than once of

a good conscience. (4) He speaks of a weak conscience; of one whose self-judgment is timid, overscrupulous, unenlightened as to the extent of his Christian freedom, but who yet must respect and follow it. (5) He tells of an evil or bad conscience, of a self-knowledge which is a knowledge of evil, creating a discord within and raising an impassable barrier between man and God. (6) He refers to a defiled conscience; a self-knowledge which is privy not only to particular acts of transgression, but to a thorough choice and love of evil. (7) From these there is but a step, if one, to the "conscience seared with a hot iron"; cauterised with an indelible mark and stain of evil.

II. The Conscience After Which St. Paul Strove Was an Unstumbling One, Not Striking Against Stumbling Stones.

1. He does not speak here of preserving his life from stumbling, but his conscience. He is determined that his perpetual judgment upon himself shall not find itself embarrassed in its course by evil done and the good left undone, shall not trip here over a hasty or uncharitable word, and there over a neglected duty, and there over an injured soul, and there over a corrupt imagination: its course shall be clear as it judges: the straight and smooth and unstained surface of the life and soul shall present nothing for the self-cognisance to dash against as a condemning object.

2. There are two chief departments of this unstumbling conscience; corresponding to the two great divisions of human duty. When the thought of God is presented, the self-judgment is not staggered: and when the thought of man is presented, still the self-cognisance is not beset by monuments of reproach or evil. Some men are not afraid of the second table. Like the rich young ruler they can say, "All these commandments have I observed from my youth."

But when the attention of the inward judge is turned to the first table, then surely the self-deceiver will be unmasked to himself: the conscience is not void of offence: its course, as it hears the case, is not smooth but stumbling.

III. St. Paul's Effort After the Attainment of This Conscience. "Here-in," on the strength of the hope of the resurrection. "I exercise" or train myself as an athlete. We are apt to think that, whatever other difficulties the apostles had to contend with, they had none within. How strongly does St. Paul combat this error! "So fight I, as not beating the air: but I keep under my body." It did not come naturally to him to have a conscience void of offence. He had to train himself for it by daily buffetings of his own body, mortifications of his own inclination, and crucifixions of his own will. The hope of a glorious resurrection bore him up, and in Christ's strength he went forward conquering and to conquer. The subject is its own application.

1. The Christian life is not easy. St. Paul found it severe. But what then? Brave men are only roused by difficulties: if the Gospel demands courage, it is all the more a Gospel for men.

2. Learn the place of conscience in the Christian scheme. It is not enough for a man to be what is commonly called a conscientious man. Cornelius was that, and more, and so was Paul before conversion. Yet the one must send men to Joppa for one who should tell him words of salvation. And the other must see Christ showing him to his own heart, as "the chief of sinners," and then disclosing to him "a more excellent way." But though obedience to conscience (apart from Christ) is not salvation, yet there is thus much of connection and continuity between a life before and a life after conversion, that it is still conscience which

guides, only conscience itself has widened its field of vision and gained a new criterion of judgment. A man is not a conscientious man now, unless Christ, as well as God, "is in all his thoughts."—Dean Vaughan.

Gradations in Guilt.

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."—Acts 26:9.

The old notion that, as sin is committed against an infinite God, it must itself be an infinite evil, and that, therefore, all sins are equally heinous and offensive, is held no longer. Its logic is unsound, and our moral sense contradicts the theory. The fact is that the degrees of human guilt in the multitude of actions men perform, under a vast variety of conditions, are indefinitely numerous. Only the Omniscient can possibly discriminate and compute them. But there are some simple principles on which we may safely rely for our spiritual guidance. We judge—

I. *That Deliberate and Direct Antagonism to Christ Is the Guiltiest of All Positions.*—"Doing things contrary to . . . Jesus Christ," when these things are done by an agent who knows what he does, reaches the very summit of iniquity. "*This is the condemnation, that light is come,*" etc. When men oppose themselves to Christian truth because "their deeds are evil," because "their craft is in danger," because they hate the light which exposes their sin and robs them of their gains or their enjoyments, then they stand in the very front rank of criminality; they deliberately take up arms against their Maker; "They take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder," etc.; they say, "*This is the Son; come, let*

us kill Him," etc. Surely God will trouble these "with his sore displeasure" (Ps. 2:5).

II. That Deliberate Neutrality Is a Most Serious Sin.—When men refrain from taking an active part against the cause of Christ and His truth, doing "nothing contrary," etc., they shun the very worst possible thing. But when they attempt to take neutral ground, and either 1. reject the claims which Christ makes on their personal subjection (Matt. 9:9; 11:28, 29, etc.), or 2. refuse to render the help they can bring to His cause (Matt. 21:30; 25:18, etc.), then they fall into great condemnation, and must "bear their iniquity" (Matt. 7:26, 27; Luke 13:25-28; Judges 5:23).

III. That Ignorance Changes the Character and Materially Affects the Degree of Guilt.—Clearly Paul was not so guilty in his acts of persecution as he would have been had he not "thought that he ought to do many things contrary," etc. He himself tells us that this ignorance of his was a great mitigation of the sinfulness of his act (1 Tim. 1:13). Our Lord also gave His own Divine sanction to this truth when suffering the pangs of crucifixion (Luke 23:34). 1. Ignorance changes the character of the sin. What Paul was guilty of in those days was not the deliberate attempt to crush the work of a Divine Redeemer; he would have recoiled from so doing had the act presented itself thus to his mind. His mistake, his condemnation, was that he had not fairly and impartially considered the claims of Jesus of Nazareth; that he had blindly assumed that his teachers were right, guiltily neglecting all the proofs which the Saviour had given that he was the Messiah "that should come into the world." 2. It also greatly reduces its turpitude. Not to have inquired as we should have done —this is wrong and blameworthy. But it is not so serious an offence,

in the sight of God or of man, as wilfully and wantonly to conspire against the Lord and to seek to positively hinder the coming of His kingdom. It may rightly comfort those who, like Paul, have to look back on offences which they have committed, when they can say, with him, "I verily thought," etc.; when it can be said to them, "Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it."

IV. That Only Absolute Ignorance Exonerates from Blame.—It is conceivable that men may be so circumstanced that their ignorance is absolute, and therefore wholly faultless. In this case there is no guilt. But how seldom is it of this kind! Usually when we do "things contrary" to truth, righteousness, God, we might have known better if we had inquired more promptly or more purely. We may not excuse ourselves if we have kept out of our mind any light we might have admitted. We may apply this to 1. the doctrines we are accepting; 2. the leaders we are encouraging; 3. the business we are conducting; 4. the family we are training.—William Clarkson.

The Church the World's Hope.

"*God hath given thee all them who sail with thee.*"—Acts 27:24.

Paul had given some very good advice, which was rejected. What then? Now some of us in a similar case would be in a huff and never offer advice more, and feel some sort of pleasure in seeing those persons get into mischief. Not so the apostle. After he had prudently abstained for some time from saying anything, he at length gave proof of his unabated affection. Let us take a lesson from him.

I. A Godly Man May Often Be Thrown Into an Ill Position for the Good of Others.

1. If they were not so placed they would not be like their Lord. Why was Christ on earth at all but for the good of sinners?

2. Moreover, is not this just the reason why the saints of God are on earth at all? Why does He not send an express chariot to take them at once to heaven?

3. There have been special cases in Scripture where the putting a person into an unpleasant condition has been a great boon to his fellow-men—Joseph, Jeremiah, Naaman's captive maid, &c.

4. As regards these positions—(1) Do not get into them of your own choice. "Put your finger in the fire," said one to a martyr once, "and see whether you can burn." "No," said he, "I don't see the use of that. If I put my own finger into the fire I have no promise from God; but if He calls me to burn for His sake I have no doubt He will give me strength to do it." You have no business to pick bad places to live in; you have no right to expose yourself to danger. (2) But if God should do it, do not be in a hurry to undo it. You may leap out of the frying-pan into the fire. You may go from bad to worse. It is just possible that if the present place has one temptation, the next may have another set. If you are placed in a family that is irreligious, make them value you. And when the time comes, do not hesitate to speak, but let your speaking be mainly by your actions. The best sermon Paul preached was when he took bread and gave thanks.

II. *Wherever We Are Cast We Should Anxiously Ask of God All the Souls That Sail with Us.*

1. God says He gave the souls to Paul; therefore I conclude Paul had asked Him. How many were they? Some two hundred and seventy. Father, some seven or eight make up your family; do not in your prayers leave out one child, nor one

connection. Now they will be of all sorts. Let me describe those that sailed with Paul. There was one good one, Luke. You have got one pious child; perhaps you have one courteous passenger, like Julius, &c., &c.—pray for all.

2. Notice that the apostle did not pray for the ship. Now, the ship is like your family name—your family dignity. Do not be praying about that.

3. Nor did he pray about the cargo. He let them fling the wheat out, and never cared for that. So you need not pray about your wealth.

4. Nor did he make any condition. He did not tell the Lord when or how the people should be saved.

5. He did not ask God to save them without means; nor did it please God to do so either, for though the means were contemptible, yet they were means—"Boards, and broken pieces."

III. *As We Should Ask for All, So We Should Labour for the Conversion of All That Sail with Us.* There were two Athenians who were to be employed by the republic in some great work. The first one had great gifts of speech; he stood up before the populace and addressed them, describing the style in which the work should be done and depicting his own qualifications and the congratulations with which they would receive him when they saw how beautifully he had finished all their designs. The next workman had no powers of speech, so he said, "I cannot speak, but all that So-and-So has said I will do." They chose him, and wisely, believing he would be a man of deeds, while the other might probably be a man of words. He that only prays for a thing, but does not work for it, is like the workman that could talk well.

1. You can begin early with good advice. Paul gave his advice before they set sail. As soon as ever your children can understand anything, let

them know about Christ. But after having given this early advice you must not think the work is done. Your boy may forget it. He may turn out a wild youth, and run quite away from you; but continue in prayer, continue in family prayer.

2. Then remember, if you would have your children saved, there is something you must not do. If Paul had prayed for these people, and then had gone down below, and had begun boring holes in the ship, you would have said, "Oh, it is no use that scoundrel praying, for see, he is scuttling the ship; he is praying to God to save them, and then going straight and doing the mischief." You parents that are inconsistent—you mothers that don't keep your promises—you fathers that talk as you ought not to talk—especially careless, prayerless parents, I do not ask you to pray for your children. Pray for yourselves first.

3. And as Paul was very anxious to point them the way in which they might be saved, telling them that the sailors must abide in the ship, and they must do this and that, so we should be very careful to explain to our children, neighbours, and connections the way of salvation; and I think we ought to do this as much as possible, in private ways.

4. Still, never be satisfied without clinching the whole work with prayer. You see, Paul did not get those that were in the ship by his work. God gave them to him. Everything is of grace.—C. H. Spurgeon.

The General Belief in Justice and Retribution.

"But they looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god."—Acts 28:6.

I. There Is a General Sense of Divine Justice Among Men.

1. This conviction exists, often imperfect and perverted, but still so manifesting itself, as it did on this occasion, as to show that it lies deep in the human mind. There are things remaining in fallen man—perceptions of what is right, and promptings to what is right, which show what he originally was, and which show also the character of the government under which he is placed. These things resemble the half-effaced inscriptions found on ancient tombs and monuments. The letters and dates are half-obliterated; but skill may enable us to fill up the inscription; to put in a letter here, and a figure there, so as to leave no doubt that the true words are restored. In like manner, there are in the soul half-effaced records of man's original nature and dignity. From them alone we never could know entirely what man originally was. Yet when they are filled up with the knowledge imparted by revelation, the record becomes complete. Among these traces left upon the hearts of men are—(1) The belief in some form of a Divinity, or Divine government as was indicated in the case of these islanders. (2) A sense of justice and a feeling that the guilty deserve to be punished.

2. Whenever men have embodied their sentiments in codes of morals, it has been done in accordance with this view. There are no books on morals, in any language, or age, which do not make a distinction between right and wrong; and for the most part, in regard to the same actions.

3. The same views are found in a community before there are regular laws in regard to the administration of justice. There never has been a nation or tribe which had not some notions that the guilty should be punished, and especially that a murderer ought not to escape. In the earliest ages it was a universal conviction that the duty of avenging the blood of the slain devolved on the "nearest of kin"

(Num. 35:19; Deut. 19:6-12; Josh. 20:3; 2 Sam. 14:11). Such a person was recognised in all Oriental nations and among American savages. The "avenger of blood" was the minister of justice—one who represented what every man felt to be a carrying out of the Divine purpose in the infliction of vengeance.

4. The same thing is true in regard to the laws of men. As the world advances in civilisation, arrangements for the punishment of crime enter into all laws.

II. There Is an Arrangement Under the Divine Government by Which Crime Will Be Detected and Punished. This was evidently the belief of these islanders; and it was founded on a state of things which was then open to observation and which exists everywhere. This might be proved in reference to all forms of guilt. The boy at school who does a wrong on the supposition that it will be undiscovered, or the boy who robs an orchard at night, is often surprised to find that there was some observer or that some circumstance of which he was not aware has brought his deed to light. But it will be more appropriate to illustrate this in reference to murder. These islanders believed that the "goddess of vengeance" would not suffer the murderer to go unpunished, although he had survived one peril. They were in error in supposing that this particular thing was proof; but they were in the right in believing that there is an arrangement designed to find out the murderer. "Murder will out." There is—

1. The awakened vigilance in every community, making every man feel that he has a personal responsibility in securing, if he can, the punishment of the murderer.

2. The difficulty of concealing the crime. In itself considered, it would not seem to be difficult to obliterate all traces of a murder; to place the

knife where it could not be found; to burn a garment so that it should not reveal the stain; or to dispose of the body so that no traces of it could be found. Yet nothing is more difficult.

3. The slight circumstances through which detection occurs—a lock of hair, a footprint, an unguarded remark, the possession of some article of little value, &c.

4. The madness of him who has committed the crime. Remorse, compelling him to confess; troubled dreams; the fear of every man.

III. There Is a General Conviction That It Is Proper and Right That This Should Be So. These islanders acquiesced in the arrangement, and saw in the fastening of the viper on Paul's hand that which was right in the case. On no subject have the sentiments of men been more decided and unanimous than on this. We may observe here that punishment is not primarily for the reformation of the guilty, nor for the mere security of a community against the commission of crime. There is a higher idea, which is founded on the fact that justice demands it; and when punishment is inflicted—when the murderer dies, the world at large acquiesces in it as right.

Conclusion: 1. These things have been written in the human heart by the hand of God himself.

2. The sinner lives in a world over which a just Being presides, and where justice demands punishment.

3. Wherever the sinner goes, this demand will follow him.

4. The universe will assent to the final punishment of the sinner.

5. There is a way in which the guilty may escape from impending judgment (Isa. 53:4-6). In Christ the guilty may find pardon, through Him the pardoned sinner will be safe on sea or land; whoso believeth on Him will be no more exposed to wrath in this world or in the world to come.—A. Barnes.

ROMANS

Human Depravity.

"For this cause God gave them up to vile affections."—Romans 1:26.

I. *The Cause* of all this gross ignorance and corruption is assigned in verse 28. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." 1. The expression plainly assumes God's having been known and that the cause of corruption and loss of the original knowledge was entirely of a moral nature. This will appear—(1) From the word itself—"they did not like." Inability: whether arising from the want of evidence, or opportunity to observe, or capacity to understand it, is not alleged. The word clearly expresses the voluntariness of the defection, the indisposition to keep the knowledge as the true cause of the loss of it. (2) From the consequence which followed in the Divine procedure: "God gave them over to a reprobate mind," &c., is clearly judicial. Nothing of this description could ever be inflicted on account of mere deficiency of intellect, but must be connected with the disposition or state of the heart. 2. The true character of God it is impossible that corrupt creatures should relish. As a creature in love with sin, he wishes to believe that God is "such an one as himself." In this way idolatry becomes an evidence of the deep and universal depravity of the human heart. This view of the case accords well with the character of the "gods many and lords many of the heathen world." Men love sin; and they make their gods sinners that they may practise evil under their sanction and patronage. The worship of their gods is such as might be anticipated from their characters. They consist, not merely of the most senseless fooleries

and extravagances, but of the most disgusting impurities and the most iron-hearted cruelties.

II. *The Consequences* are clearly represented in verses 26 and 28, as bringing upon them the just displeasure of a forgotten and insulted God. 1. "God gave them over to vile affections," "to a reprobate mind." God is not represented as infusing any evil principles; but simply as leaving them to the unrestrained operation of the principles of evil already in them. What an awful curse this was will sufficiently appear from the portrait in the passage before us. The various evils are represented as "not convenient"—not becoming—against all propriety and all law; and as abounding—personal and social life being "filled" with them. The description shows the fearful length to which the corrupt affections of "a reprobate mind" will carry those who are given up to their unchecked dominion. We are not, it is true, to suppose all the evils enumerated to exist in individual characters. Many of them are of such different kinds that they could not exist together. It is with nations as with individuals. Some of the features of the picture may appear with more or less of characteristic aggravation or diminution, according to particular circumstances. But of the general state of the Gentile world, at that time and still, the outline here drawn, hideous as it is, is not overcharged, but faithful to nature and to fact. 2. The displays of "eternal power and Godhead" in the works of God rendered men's forgetfulness and ignorance of Him "without excuse." In like manner, the wickedness here described was also rendered inexcusable by what is stated in verse 32. The judgment originally pronounced by Jehovah against sin was death. Of

this tradition could not fail to carry down some remembrance, and tradition had the assistance of natural conscience. And while the sentence of death was thus engraven on the memories and consciences of sinful men, the early and singular institution of animal sacrifices spoke the very same language. And so did the regular fulfilment of the original sentence against sin—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"; together with all the judgments by which the Supreme Ruler manifested His displeasure against sin. Men, then, knew, and ought to have kept in mind, "the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." Yet, instead of this, they cast off all restraint. Instead of "striving against sin" they strove to rid their minds of every check to the commission of it.—R. Wardlaw.

Judgment.

"The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."—Romans 2:5, 6.

I. *Belief in a Judgment Is Part of Our Faith in the Sanity of the Universe.* Judgment is not an arbitrary enactment, but an inevitable process: the sequel and corollary of our sense of responsibility. If goodness and right are anything more than words, there is Judgment to come out of all that is done on earth. Daniel Webster, the American, when asked what was the greatest thought that ever occupied his mind, replied, "My personal accountability to God." And I know of nothing so essential to the definition of a man as that sense of responsibility. Eliminate that, and man is not. So delicate are the tablets of our soul, which we call memory, that nothing howsoever slight can ever be razed from them. Nothing

dies from out the memory. When God says, "Son, remember!" the memory will give up its dead, an unerring transcript of life. Was it not Plato who said that each judge of the dead "will, with his naked soul, pierce into the other naked soul?" The idea is one with that which St. Paul has enshrined in the text which the Revised Version has so transfigured: "We must all be made manifest before the Judgment-seat of God." We must be shown openly: each man discovered to himself. In that awful day of revelation each soul will know itself and go to its own place, as if driven by inner necessity. For each soul seeing itself will, in the eternal light, judge itself by the standard of its own capacities.

II. As we "reason of judgment to come," there is another illuminating idea in the New Testament, which I dare not omit; *God hath committed all judgment to the Son of Man.* Before Him we are to stand. We are to stand before One who knows what is in man: One who was bound up with mankind in all things: One who was tried in all points as we are. He will judge us with that human pity, mercy and love which make Him to our hearts the Christ. It will be Christian judgment.

III. *Finally, There Is Quite Another Side to the Judgment.* That apostolic text, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," is generally read, I am afraid, as a menace, that nothing in heaven or hell can exempt a man from the harvest of his misdeeds. But it is a promise too—a promise for the encouragement of right-doers; and the pledge of God is behind that promise. Ah! behind all the error and pain, passion and failure of life, there is that refuge—the Judge of all the earth will see right done.—B. J. Snell.

Conscience.

"Their conscience also bearing witness."—Romans 2:15.

The apostle is explaining how the heathen, who had not the written law of God, were yet amenable to an unwritten law impressed on the hearts of all mankind. Their conscience is a witness for or against them.

I. *Its Nature and Office.*—1. God has given man a written law as the supreme standard, whose object is to educate and confirm him in his duty to God and man. This law, however, is—(1) Of late communication. The Old Testament, given only gradually through centuries. The New Testament only when the world was already old. (2) Of only local extent. Before Moses there was none. In St. Paul's day it was known only to the Jews. In our day vast regions and even in our own country too many have no knowledge of it. If, then, there were only God's written law, the mass of men, in the past and still, would have no standard of right and wrong—their passions unchecked. Society would be impossible. 2. But the existence of a written moral law implies an already existing moral sense, or unwritten law. Without this our obedience to any law would want a moral character. It would be either mere training and discipline, or submission to force. There would be no sense of obligation to keep it, no choice of the will and heart in doing so. 3. An unwritten law of God, however, does exist. In every race there is an instinct which—(1) Condemns evil. The judgment day not only in the future. The great white throne, and He that sits on it, are in effect set up in every bosom. No deception is possible. No outward position screens us. (2) Vindicates the right. The answer of a good conscience is the support of the soul under any trial. Of old it sustained the

saints in their fiery trials. Fidelity to principle still bears up many a one. It is the greatest solace in the retrospect of life. (3) Is given to receive and act up to the higher teachings of the written law. "By manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Imposes on us the duty of learning all the bearings of our obligations.

II. *Hindrances to Its Healthful Vigour.*—1. Ignorance. In savage life, obscured and limited in its range by circumstances. Imperfect conception of relative duties from the struggle for self-preservation. Now long reign of selfish passion. Violence and hereditary darkness. In criminal life amongst ourselves. The child of a thief, what can it know of right and wrong in some directions? 2. Perversion. Education colours our estimate of the character of acts in many cases. Pascal speaks of morality as varying with latitude and longitude. This is seen—(1) In religion. Inquisitors torturing and burning for the greater glory of God. Whitefield defending slavery. Paul thinking he honoured God by helping to stone St. Stephen. (2) In business. Conventional or trade morality. Men do in business what they would shrink from in private life. 3. The seared conscience. The religious faculty may be well-nigh extirpated by neglect; like eyes of cave insects and fishes. 4. The weak conscience. A failing that leans to virtue's side. Troubles itself and others by making a principle of what is really indifferent. The disputes in Paul's Epistles, new moons, eating flesh, Levitical laws, &c. So some object to matters of no moral moment.

III. *Characteristics of a Healthy Conscience.*—1. It accepts and acts on principle, not its accidental illustration. It guards itself in great matters by fidelity in all. Its rule is, "He that is faithful in that which is least

is faithful also in much." 2. It is not content with profession, but carries its convictions into practice; not "go" and "went not." 3. It is always humble. Feeling its own weakness and constant need of strength. 4. It is manly. Will not yield to custom, favour, gain. 5. It bases its action on the law of Christ as the ideal of morality. 6. It keeps the example before it, and remembers its obligations to honour Him by loyal duty.

Conclusion: One may strengthen and enlighten conscience. In any case it grows with the wider realisation of the breadth and sweep of God's law. In our own day it has widened its sphere. Needs still further quickening in each walk of life; especially in the vital matters of the soul. The deputy of the Almighty. Bring your soul before it. As it asks you, "Guilty, or not guilty?" answer. If guilty, repentance and a holy life, looking to the great salvation of Christ, will reverse the verdict.—C. Geikie.

Faith the Way of Peace.

"Therefore being justified by faith, let us have peace."—Romans 5:1.

Of all phrases, of all theological terms, which puzzle most the ordinary layman, I believe that this phrase, "justification by faith," is the most puzzling. "Why," says the layman, "as far as I can see, St. Paul is wrong. In the City, on the Stock Exchange, a man is considered justified by what he does." And so, again, from another point of view, it may be urged that this faith seems a far-away, unpractical thing. Religion is in a poor and miserable place if it is to be held with the heart, but not with the mind and intellect at all. Let us see, therefore, whether such objections as these are true or not.

I. *And First Let Us Overthrow Those Very Common and Popular*

Misconceptions About Faith. Is the faith made so much of in the Bible really concerned merely with sentiment or feeling or imagination? If it has nothing to do with character or life or acts, then there are no words strong enough to be found with which to hold it up to contempt. But let us take two illustrations from real life of what faith is, and from them we shall glean some sort of idea why such a tremendous stress is laid in the Bible on the possession of it. Picture an explorer starting in his ship for the Arctic regions. He has picked his men with great care, and the great moment has come at last. There is a crowd around, watching the start; the moment comes when the moorings are unloosed and the ship is launched upon her way. All this is an act of faith, and the act of faith carries whatever follows with it. Surely the whole voyage is planned in faith and worked by faith. Or, take another instance. A girl is sitting in her room on the last night before she leaves her home. She is to be married on the morrow, and all the unknown future spreads itself before her. What keeps her steady as she faces unknown duties? It is her faith in the man she loves.

II. Now, if trust in the faithfulness of nature, faith in a human personality, however fallible, is such an ennobling thing, *how are we to measure the inspiring power of faith in an overruling, living God?* At least we may say this, that the greater the object of faith, the more ennobling the faith becomes, and that St. Paul is justified when first among the powers which mould the Christian character he places faith.

III. But, if faith is so intimately concerned with character, and we can only know character as it is revealed in works, what is the meaning of *the vivid contrast which St. Paul draws between faith and works as the means of our justification before*

God? The answer lies in the fact that faith is the one great quality within us which is supremely capable of education, while any attempt to be justified by works is apt to lead towards a deadening satisfaction with our present condition.—Bishop Winnington-Ingram.

Reconciliation with God.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."—Romans 5:10.

I. *The Believer's Reconciliation.*—
 1. The previous character of the partakers of this benefit; they "were enemies to God." But it is no easy thing to induce men to acknowledge this. They may indeed acknowledge that they have some imperfections and infirmities; but they cannot be persuaded that they are "enemies to God." 2. This inestimable boon itself. There are but few who do not know the value of reconciliation. Who has not tasted the bitterness of estrangement? Who has not enjoyed the deliciousness of renewed friendship? How delicious is national peace, domestic peace, ecclesiastical peace. But the blessing of reconciliation must be judged of by the Being whom we have offended and provoked. Who knoweth the power of His anger? And, oh, to know that we are one with God again! Why, then, trials have no curse, death no sting, and all things work together for good. 3. The reconciliation is perfect and perpetual. A breach may be so far made up as to exclude hostility. Absalom was allowed to live three years in Jerusalem without seeing the king's face. There may be an admission of civilities and even general intercourse where there may be no admission of cordialness. But how is it here?

(chap. viii, 35-39). 4. The medium of it. "The death of his Son." We escape, but He suffered. There are some who deny the vicariousness of the sufferings of Christ. But upon their principles it seems hard to account for His sufferings at all. According to these, He died not for others' sins, and we know He could not for His own; so upon this ground He suffered in every respect as innocent; and if this were true, we may well ask, Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. Why is He thus making Him to be sin for us who knew no sin? Why, if our tears, or repentance, or alms could have made reconciliation with God, He never would have been pleased to bruise His only begotten Son; and if in His sacrifice God did nothing needlessly or in vain, then there must have been a propriety, a necessity in the great transaction. So the apostle affirms, "It became Him to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. Thus your reconciliation is made in a way that is as honourable to God as it is safe to us. The just God appears a Saviour. Now, this blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, having spoken to the justice of God, and satisfied it, speaks to the conscience of the sinner and gives it quiet and peace. Thus have we boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Christ.

II. *The Believer's Salvation.*—1. We are "saved by His life." But are we not saved when reconciled? No. The one regards God, the other regards ourselves. But did not He exclaim when He expired, "It is finished"? Yes; but what was finished? The work of redemption, or the procuring of the thing; not the work of salvation or the applying of the thing. The case is this. We were guilty, and by the death of God's Son expiation was made for our offences. He put away sin by the sacrifice of

Himself, and thus removed every hindrance on God's side to our return to Him. Yet we are not actually saved till we receive Christ and are found in Him. Indeed, as to the commencement of the work, and the certainty of the issue, Christians are said to be saved already. "By grace are ye saved through faith." But as to the actual consummation, they are not saved till death is swallowed up in victory. This work of salvation is a gradual work carried on through the whole of the Christian's life on earth. We go from strength to strength, and in the Divine image we are "renewed day by day." 2. How this salvation is achieved. By His life; His mediatorial life; that life in which He is now living in our nature in heaven. This is what He referred to when He said, "Because I live ye shall live also." Had He not risen, our hopes would have perished in the same grave. "But we are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Everything that concerns our salvation is now to be viewed in connection with His life. He is now making intercession for us. He is a living Saviour, and as such He received the whole dispensation of the Spirit for men (Eph. 4:8, &c.; Acts 2:33). It is as a living Saviour, "it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and out of his fulness have all we received grace for grace." 3. From hence you should learn to dwell more upon the present life of Christ. Christians love to hear of Christ's death. But it would be in vain to view Him as the crucified One unless we could view Him as the glorified One. Here is the ground of our highest triumph (8:34).

III. *Their Confirmation*:—derived from an inference drawn from one to the other. "For if . . . much more." Observe the conclusiveness of the inference. What can be more

natural than for us to argue from the past to the future; from what has been done to what may be; to feel the remembrance of one favour encouraging our hope of another, especially when we argue from the greater to the less; as 8:32 does? It was wonderful that God should have provided an ark for the saving of Noah and his house; but it was not wonderful, after He had provided it, that He should not suffer him to sink and go to the bottom. It is wonderful that God should have given us exceeding great and precious promises; but it is not wonderful, after He had given them, that He should fulfil the same. It is wonderful, Christians, that He should have begun a good work in you; but having begun it, it is not wonderful that He should perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.—W. Jay.

The Atonement a Subjective Fact.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—Romans 5:11.

The word "atonement" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and here it means not what conventional theology propounds as a doctrine by that name, but a moral state of mind. It means, as the margin has it, and as it is three times translated elsewhere, reconciliation, and this is really the old English meaning of the word atonement, *at-one-ment*. Thus Shakespeare used it:

"He seeks to make atonement between the Duke of Glo'ster and our brothers."

We learn from this short text—

I. *That the Atonement Is a Conscious Possession of the Soul*.—"We have now received the atonement," Paul says. He does not speak of it

as a fact that was accomplished eighteen hundred years ago, nor as a speculative doctrine of his theology: but as something in his own mind and in the mind of those to whom he wrote—a something of which he and they were conscious. It is one thing for man to have an atonement in his theology, discuss it with great learning and ability and defend it with enthusiasm, and another thing for him to have it in his own soul as a matter of blessed consciousness. 1. As a mere doctrine it often makes a man an arrogant bigot; but as a feeling, always a humble saint. 2. As a mere doctrine it may light men to hell and in the nether regions may aggravate their misery. As a feeling it will conduct them to heaven and encircle them with the light of immortality. Do we feel the at-one-ment in our hearts? Are we conscious of reconciliation to the Great Author of our being?

We learn—

II. That the Atonement Is a Conscious Possession of the Soul Imparted by Christ.—"Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." In whatever soul it exists there is a conscious feeling that it has been introduced by the intervention and agency of Christ. He is the Great, the only, Reconciler of the soul to God. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Mark the expression. Not reconciling God unto the world. Such a reconciliation is—1. Impossible. 2. Unnecessary. He need not change. He could never become more placable and merciful. How does Christ reconcile man to his Creator? In the only way in which reconciliation could be effected. By affording the strongest possible demonstration of Divine love. "God so loved the world," etc. Legislation, philosophy, ethics, religion, civilisation, poetry—none, nor all of these,

can bring this at-one-ment into the soul. This is the exclusive work of Christ.

III. That the Atonement Is a Conscious Possession of the Soul, Inspiring It with Joy in the Eternal.—"We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The joy springs from the assurance that the Almighty is once more our friend. This joy may include three elements—

First: Thanksgiving. Gratitude is an element of joy. It inspires the songs of immortality; the reconciled soul traces its atonement to the free, tender, boundless love of God through Jesus Christ.

Secondly: Security. The sense of security is an element of joy. If God is our friend, His love is unchangeable, His power almighty, His resources illimitable. And what a sense of security must His friendship inspire!

Thirdly: Adoration. Had we a friend that bestowed upon us the highest favours, inspiring our gratitude, and whose promises and capacities assured us of our security, if he were imperfect in moral character we could not heartily rejoice in his friendship. Moral admiration is the highest element of joy; and this requires moral excellence in the object. God has this in an infinite degree. Thus, if He is our friend, we may well rejoice in Him, with the most ecstatic rapture and triumphant delight.

Conclusion.—Learn the paramount necessity of human nature—ATONEMENT with God. Learn to appreciate the intervention of Christ, by whom alone it can be effected. No system of belief, no code of morality, can accomplish it. To the Gospel men must look. Learn the test of genuine religion—joy "in God." The world has joy in creatures and in worthless things—the joy of the truly good is joy in God Himself.—David Thomas.

The Fall and the Atonement.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."—Romans 5:18.

These are the two main facts involved in the text. Round these there has gathered a vast cloud of theological formulas which render it difficult to discern them in their simplicity and integrity. I have a few suggestions to make, which are simple and hang well together. 1. We can hardly begin to reflect on the fall without asking, "Why did God permit it? why make man so that he not only could, but almost must, fall away from his original righteousness? The very moment we begin to reflect on the fall we are confronted by the origin of evil. Why did God permit it to invade and stain His universe? 2. So, again, with that other fact, "How could the obedience, or sacrifice, of the one just Man avail for the salvation of the whole sinful race? How is it so to tell on those who have fallen from righteousness as to recover them to the love and service of righteousness? To tell us that these problems are insoluble is to contradict the inspired apostle. To warn us against intermeddling with them is to pour contempt on the labours of eighteen centuries. And, worse still, it is to bid us suppress an inbred and unconquerable tendency, *viz.*, that when we believe certain facts we cannot but try to frame some reasonable conception of them, in which each shall hold its due place and form part of an intelligible and harmonious whole.

I. *The Fall.*—1. We start from a point familiar and approved. (1) If God were to surround Himself, not with mere automata that would mechanically obey the impulses of His

will, but with creatures capable of love and obedience, He must give them wills of their own and leave them free. A mechanical or compelled goodness is not a goodness at all. If the angels are incapable of sin they are also incapable of righteousness. If they are not free to choose between good and evil, but are kept by the power and will of God, then their goodness is God's goodness and not their own. If the stars keep their courses only by an involuntary and unconscious obedience to natural laws, there is nothing noble, because there is nothing free, in their obedience. But if, as some of our poets have dreamed, each "heavenly body" is but the vesture of some great spirit, then the very stars become moral, because voluntary, agents, who render a willing and constant obedience to the laws imposed upon them. 2. Now, what the choice of God would be we may infer from our own preference. Just as we prefer to have even a dog about us to all the mechanical toys ever invented; or just as we love to have children about us whose love we can win, who are capable of a true because voluntary goodness, so we may reasonably believe God would choose to surround Himself with many orders of creatures, each capable of loving Him of its own will, and of rendering Him a free and glad obedience. 3. But this very capacity involves an alternative. Those who can freely lift their wills into accord with the will of God, can also deflect their wills from His. And was it not well-nigh inevitable that, in the infinite possibilities of existence, some of them should strike out a path for themselves, and take that rather than keep the path marked out for them by God? How else were they to prove to themselves that their wills were their own, and free? 4. This free will, if a great is also a most perilous endowment; for there is a certain charm in assert-

ing it. It is not mere depravity which prompts a child to do that which he knows he ought not to do. The temptation, although he may be unconscious of it, is the charm of assuring himself and showing others that he is free, that he is not a mere link in the chain of necessity, not a mere pipe in the fingers of others to sound what stop they please. Who has not felt this fascination, and done that which he knew would yield him neither pleasure nor profit, simply in order that he might feel and assert his freedom? And who that has felt this charm can doubt that when myriads of creatures had been called into being gifted with free will, some of them would be sure to prove their freedom by trying whether or not their wills were their own? 5. Our argument leads us straight into that great mystery—the origin of evil. Evil is in the world, in the universe, by no Divine fiat or decree. It is not of God's making, but of our own. And from this gift of a will free to select its own path and take its own course have sprung all the miseries of evil. What God intended for our good, as our special honour and distinction, we have turned to our own harm. But before any man complains that so perilous a gift has been conferred upon him, and that he is called to rule and control it, let him remember the alternative—incapability of conscious and voluntary choice of righteousness and love. If any man would prefer to sink so low as that, it certainly is hard to see what God made him a man for. But does any such man exist?

II. *Its Consequences.*—When men, in the exercise of their free will, have fallen into sin, they begin to make excuse. They say, "It is human to err. Sin is common to all; how, then, can I hope to escape it?" This is one of the saddest consequences. 2. Men condemn even while they excuse

themselves. All the while they feel that sin has alienated them from the life of God; that He is displeased with them; that they are debased; and that God must be propitiated. And thus men are made both reckless and hopeless. On the one hand, sin seems so human, so inevitable, that it can hardly be very wrong; and, on the other hand, it is so alien to God that He can hardly be expected to pardon it.

III. *From These Consequences We Get Some of Our Best and Simplest Conceptions of Redemption.*—1. What is the answer of the Divine grace to the feeling of doubt and despair? It is this. While we are yet sinners, God, in the person of His Son, comes down and dwells among us. He virtually says to us, "See, much as I hate the sins which have degraded and enslaved you, fellowship with me is not impossible. I am in your midst to bless you by turning every one of you away from your sins. So far from being separated from you, I have become one with you, that you may become one with me, partaking your nature that you may partake mine." 2. Men say, "It is human to sin; so long as we are men we can hardly hope to avoid it." "Nay," replies Christ; "for, see, I, too, am a man; and which of you convicteth me of sin? So far from sin being an essential part of manhood, or a necessary adjunct of it, you feel that I am a higher style of man, precisely because I never at any time transgressed My Father's commandments, because I make it my will to do his will." This, then, is a chief way in which the redemption of Christ comes to tell on men, in which they are atoned to the God against whom they have sinned. Our wills are ours, then; but they are ours that we may make them His. And not till we do make them His shall we be recovered from the fall, and know the power of His redemption.—S. Cox.

The Leading of the Spirit.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Romans 8:14.

I. *It Leads the Willing.*—1. "Led." Not drawn by rope, not hauled, but led. 2. Yea, more—gladly led. It is not the leading of the sulky horse behind the dray, pulling and being pulled, but of one following along with dangling halter. It is not the picture of him who says, "my name is down on the church-book—that is enough," but of him who says, "Here am I, Lord; send me." This is the test of our discipleship—if we go gladly.

II. *Leadership of the Spirit Is Possible.*—There are those who doubt this. They say, "How can God influence us this way or that?" Well, look at the things that do influence us. Sometimes we are all down with the blues. It is not that we are weaker than usual, but some influence from the outside world is moving upon us. The market has gone wrong, politicians are sending the country to ruin, etc. At other times other influences come to us. The silent trees swaying gently in the wind, or the smooth surface of some quiet lake soothes us; and if the things of nature can so affect us, cannot the Creator? Then surrender to Him. Open your heart, and He will come in and reign.

III. *God Will Lead His Children.*—The other night you heard a faint knock at the door, and when it was opened there stood a timid little beggar girl with a pinched, wan face, and as you looked down at her she said something about bread. By and by the door burst open and in came a great big boy. He bounded across the room, jumped upon your knee, flung his arm around your neck and, plunging his hand into your pocket, helped himself. So we who are led

by the Spirit do not go to God as beggars, but as His own sons, whom He receiveth as a father receiveth his children. Conclusion: 1. Led by the Spirit! So let us live, work, believe, enjoy and triumph by the Spirit. 2. He comes into our hearts as the old warriors used to go into a city. When they had broken through the wall they marched straight for the citadel. Merchants, when they entered, went about, this way and that, through the streets. But the conqueror went first to the citadel, and, when he had taken that, he sent one platoon down this street to clear out the enemy there, and another down that street to drive out that body, until all were driven out; then he had the city in his grasp, and he ruled over it. So when the Spirit comes into our hearts it goes straight to the conscience and lays hold on that, then it sends a truth down this way to drive out this passion, and another that way to subdue that jealousy, and another that other way to quell that rebellion. Then, when all is driven out, He makes His abode in that heart, and becomes its counsellor, guide and ruler for ever.—C. H. Fowler.

Witness of the Spirit.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—Romans 8:16.

There are few texts, perhaps, that are a greater perplexity to many earnest persons than this. I am constantly asked, What is the witness of the Spirit? I would set myself to answer this question as simply and honestly as I know how.

I. *To Whom Is This Witness Given?* These words set before us the great truth that we need constantly to be reminded of, that true religion is the action of the Spirit of God upon our spirits. The only re-

ligion that can satisfy is the work of the Spirit of God in our spirits. Be sure of this, that creeds, however true, and forms of worship, however solemn or impressive or earnest, can never give you the religious life. We must be born of the Spirit. But note further that although this life is begotten of the Spirit of God, yet is He to be willingly received and submitted to.

II. And Now in Turning To See What This Witness of the Spirit Is, Let Us Be Very Simple. There is much significance here in the emphatic assurance with which St. Paul speaks. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus." He bids us take it for granted and be quite sure that if we are the children of God this witness of the Spirit is ours. Since the realm of the religious life is in the Spirit, do not let us be always dragging it up into the region of the intellect, analysing and defining and perplexing ourselves about all sorts of mysteries. The witness of the Spirit is not *to* our spirits that we are the children of God. It is *with* our spirits that God is our Father. Not within is the gaze turned, but without—not downward at self, but upwards at the Saviour. This is the great truth to which the Holy Spirit witnesses; not to our goodness, not to our superiority, but to the love and glory of Jesus Christ; to the greatness and fulness of His salvation; to the infinite lovingkindness of our Father.

III. In Thinking of This Witness of the Spirit Let Us Remember that It Is No Less Divine Because It Moves on the Ordinary and Natural Lines of Spiritual Influence. There are men and woman who by their contact do help to create within us a new experience. Rest, peace, truth, love, hope, are often imparted to us

by contact with others. Their influence is at once distinct, yet indistinguishable. We cannot mark exactly the influence, how it came and how it wrought. Now it is in this quiet and natural way, for the most part, that the witness of the Spirit is given.—M. G. Pearse.

The Witness of the Spirit.

"*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit.*"—Romans 8:16.

I. To Whom Is This Witness Given?—1. True religion is not a set of creeds, defined and believed just as a man may believe in the North Pole or the law of gravitation. The sphere of religion is not in the man's head, but in the heart. Nor is it a matter of forms of worship—singing hymns or saying prayers or hearing sermons. These things may be gone through, and all the time the real man may be unmoved and asleep. It is precisely here that a great many people make a mistake. They are not satisfied with their religious life. That which they have is unreal, outside. So they either set to work to examine their creed, or else they change it. Or else they think the form of worship is at fault. And at last they are ready to give up all in despair. 2. The only religion that can satisfy is the work of the Spirit of God in our spirits. By all means see that your creed stands square with the Word of God, and seek the forms of worship that help you to get nearest to God. But be sure of this, that creeds however true, and forms of worship however solemn and impressive, can never give you the religious life. We must be born of the Spirit. The manner of this new creation may differ in a thousand ways. With some it may be gentle and gradual as the dawn of day; with others it may be as a day when the noise of

battle rolled. 3. Although this life is begotten of the Spirit of God, yet is He to be willingly received and submitted to (ver. 14). Now to such there is given the witness of the Spirit.

II. What This Witness Is.—1. There is much significance in the emphatic assurance with which St. Paul speaks. He bids us take it for granted that if we are the children of God this witness of the Spirit is ours. Children do not know what the estate is worth, but they do know that it is theirs, and whatever there is in it belongs to them. Think of a child saying, "I am going to see what I am heir to," and spending all its time in prying into everything with a microscope to make sure that it is there. Since the realm of the religious life is in the spirit, do not let us be always analysing and defining and perplexing ourselves about all sorts of mysteries. There are some people who always begin to tell me their symptoms, and ask me what I think of them and what they ought to do. Well, forget that you have any constitution. Give up the luxury of a liver. Work hard at some outdoor work so that you have not time to think about yourself; and then when you get very hungry, eat; and when you have got very tired, sleep. There are spiritual dyspeptics, too, who are always talking about their symptoms, and who think they have not got any religion at all unless they are finding something to worry themselves and other people about. Come, let us be bold to say, "Well, whatever the witness of the Spirit is, if Jesus Christ is mine, this too is mine." And yet, on the other hand, let us honour the Giver of the estate by seeking to make the most of it; finding out how rich and blest we are. Now there are some who think of the witness of the Spirit as a kind of revelation from heaven, or a thrill of rapture—something which lifts us up above other people

and singles us out as the favourites of God. If anything could make a man a Pharisee it is surely that. It is the very root of that Pharisaism which the Lord denounced. The witness of the Spirit is not *to* our spirits that we are the children. It is *with* our spirits that God is our Father. He is to take of the things of Christ and manifest them unto us. There is in Jesus Christ a sight of our sin that humbles and shames us, yet there is a sight of love that overwhelms us. The Spirit puts us in possession of that love as our own; and in loving tenderness the Father bends over us so pitiful, so careful for us that all the heart cries, "Abba, Father." A blessed consciousness is thus wrought within us, which has no room for pride, but only for self-forgetfulness, wonder, gratitude, and glad obedience.

III. This Witness Is No Less Divine Because It Moves on the Ordinary and Natural Lines of Spiritual Influence.—There are men and women who help to create within us a new experience. Their influence is at once distinct yet indistinguishable. We cannot mark exactly the influence, how it came and how it wrought. Now it is in this quiet and natural way for the most part that the witness of the Spirit is given. The idea is of a blending of spiritual influence. The Gulf Stream may be taken as a parable of this. For some eight months of the year our seas ought to be frozen over so that no ship could approach our shores. Our islands should be a rough, rude tract of country where only the hardest forms of life could survive—a land of forest where wild furry beasts should roam, and where the deep snows should make agriculture almost impossible. What mystery is this which delivers us? Away in the distant southern world, in the fierce heat of the tropics starts the Gulf Stream. It gathers the warmth of the sun and

sends it for thousands of miles across the seas to lave our shores. And thus the arctic winter is driven from us; and our ports are open all the year round; over us stretch the kindlier skies; about us blow the gentler winds; our fields are covered with grass, the valleys are thick with corn. But where is this Gulf Stream which does such wonders? Can you see it? No, we cannot see it, but it is there. The parable is a many-sided illustration of the truth. Of nature, of ourselves, we do dwell in a land of winter—frozen and well-nigh dead; without the energy to put forth any life of God. But lo, we know not how, but by the Holy Spirit of God there is breathed about us and within us the love of God, softening, transforming, bringing to us a new heaven and a new earth. And now do grow and flourish blessed things which before we knew not. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,” etc.—Mark Guy Pearse.

Sons and Heirs.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”
—Romans 8:17.

God Himself is His greatest gift. The loftiest blessing which we can receive is that we should be heirs, possessors of God. The text tells us—

I. *No Inheritance Without Sonship.*—1. The lower creatures are shut out from the gifts which belong to the higher forms of life, because these cannot find entrance into their nature. Man has higher gifts because he has higher capacities. In man there are more windows and doors knocked out. He can think, and feel, and desire, and will, and resolve; and so he stands on a higher level. 2. And so spiritual blessings require a spiritual capacity for the reception of them; you cannot have the inheritance

unless you are sons. Salvation is not chiefly a deliverance from outward consequences, but a renewal of the nature that makes these consequences certain. 3. But the inheritance is also future, and the same principle applies there. There is no heaven without sonship; because all its blessings are spiritual. It is not the golden harps, etc., that make the heaven of heavens; but the possession of God. To dwell in His love, and to be filled with His light, and to walk for ever in the glory of His sunlit face, to do His will, and to bear His character stamped upon our foreheads—that is the glory and the perfectness to which we are aspiring. Do not then rest in the symbols that show us, darkly and far-off, what that future glory is. 4. Well, then, if all that be true, what a flood of light does it cast upon the text! For who can possess God but they who love Him? who can love but they who know His love? How can there be fellowship betwixt Him and any one except the man who is a son because he hath received of the Divine nature, and in whom that Divine nature is growing up into a Divine likeness?

II. *No Sonship Without a Spiritual Birth.*—1. The Apostle John, in that most wonderful preface to his Gospel, teaches that sonship is not a relation into which we are born by natural birth, that we become sons after we are men, and that we become sons by a Divine act, the communication of a spiritual life, whereby we are born of God. The same apostle, in his Epistles, contrasts the sons of God who are known for such because they do righteousness, and the world which knew not Christ, and says, “In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the devil”—echoing thus Christ’s words, “If God were your Father, ye would love Me: ye are of your father, the devil.” 2. Nothing in all this contradicts the belief that all men are

the children of God inasmuch as they are shaped by His Divine hand, and He has breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. But, notwithstanding, it still remains true that there are men created by God, loved and cared for by Him, for whom Christ died, who might be, but are not, sons of God. 3. Fatherhood! what does that word itself teach us? It involves that the Father and the child shall have kindred life, and that between the Father's heart and the child's heart there shall pass answering love, flashing backwards and forwards, like the lightning that touches the earth and rises from it again. A simple appeal to your own consciousness will decide if that be the condition of all men. No sonship except by spiritual birth; and if not such sonship, then the spirit of bondage. You are sons because born again, or slaves and "enemies by wicked works."

III. No Spiritual Birth Without Christ.—If for sonship there must be a birth, the very symbol shows that such a process does not lie within our own power. The centre point of the Gospel is this regeneration. If we understand that the Gospel simply comes to make men live better, to work out a moral reformation—why, there is no need for a Gospel at all. If the change were a simple change of habit and action on the part of men, we could do without a Christ. But if redemption be the giving of life from God, and the change of position in reference to God's love and God's law, neither of these two changes can a man effect for himself. No new birth without Christ; no escape from the old standing-place, "enemies to God by wicked works," by anything that we can do. But Christ has effected an actual change in the aspect of the Divine government to us; and He has carried in the golden urn of His humanity a new spirit and a new life which He has

set down in the midst of the race; and the urn was broken on the Cross of Calvary, and the water flowed out, and whithersoever that water comes there is life, and whithersoever it comes not there is death!

IV. No Christ Without Faith.—Unless we are wedded to Jesus Christ by the simple act of trust in His mercy and His power, Christ is nothing to us. We may talk about Christ for ever. He may be to us much that is very precious; but the question of questions, on which everything else depends, is, Am I trusting to Him as my Divine Redeemer? am I resting in Him as the Son of God? Ceremonies, notions, beliefs, formal participation in worship is nothing. Christ is nothing but a judge and a condemnation to him that trusts Him not.—A. Maclaren.

The Redemption of the Body.

"*The redemption of the body.*"—Romans 8:23.

I. The Christian Is a Man Gathering "Firstfruits."—The harvest is not come. He looks out upon the beauty of nature, and he sees a "firstfruit" of a renewed and perfect creation. He has a happy thought, it is a "first-fruit" of an endless and universal joy. He tastes the delights of a pure affection, it is the "firstfruit" of a world where all is love. He catches a glimpse of Christ, it is a "firstfruit" of an eternal presence. He plucks from the tree of truth a holy feeling, it is the "firstfruit" of the rich abundance of a matured saintliness. To him, everything is a "firstfruit." If it is not the full glow of summer yet, it is not winter, "If the early grapes be so sweet, what shall the vintage be?"

II. A Man Untaught Might Say, "Surely Those Who Gather Firstfruits at Least Will Have an Immu-

nity from Sorrow."—St. Paul said, "We which have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves." I do not find that the Church has less suffering than the world without, only I find it more "inward." This "inward groaning," what is it, and whence? As soon as a man really receives one of the "firstfruits" of the Holy Ghost, immediately a very great change takes place in that soul. But how with the body? Is it altered? Some little degree of physical refinement may grow out of the spiritual change; but in the main the body is the same. It prompts the same desires, it leads on to the same sins. Sometimes it inflames us, sometimes it drags us. And so it will be to death, the changed soul in the unchanged body, the redeemed in the unredeemed. Now here is all the conflict. Of all our misery this is the painful element, the inability of the body to carry out the higher aspirations of the soul. Other things may bring the sigh, the tear, but this brings the groan, "When shall I be holy? When will the contest cease?" "O wretched man that I am," etc. So—

III. *Because We Have the First-fruits of the Spirit, "We Groan Within Ourselves Waiting for the Adoption, to Wit, the Redemption of Our Body."*—The moment of death comes, the body and the soul are parted for a while. From that date the redemption of the body begins. It dies, it dissolves, it lies hidden, God works in it as He pleases. Presently it comes forth; it is another, and yet the same, identical to be known, to be loved, to be embraced, and yet how changed! It is in sweetest harmony with the soul; it is not a whit less spiritual and heavenly than that which once it thwarted. It has taken the image of God; it perfectly reflects Christ. And then, and not till then, its redemption is complete. Here is the great result of the travail of the believer. Conclusion: 1. All you

have to do now with the body is to hold it down and keep it under. And that effort will be your "groaning." But only "till He comes." His second advent will perfect the reformation of your body, as His first did your soul. 2. There is probably a very close analogy between the redemption of the soul and that of the body. The seed of life sown in death, the long hidden process, the dying first before there is life indeed, the maintenance of the original character, where, nevertheless, all is new, the likeness to Christ in both, the intention of all to serve, in all the perfect sovereignty of God. 3. The focus of faith and hope to all is the coming of Christ. The groaning soul of the believer, carrying the burden of the flesh, looks there. The emancipated spirits of the departed "longing to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven," look there. Even while they wait in paradise the redemption of that body, still perfect, is going on, and they stretch on with ardent desire for the moment when He shall bring forth the whole man in the integrity of his being. And in those at this moment who lie in the grave, out of our sight, it is that holy, blessed work which is going on. For that reason we gave them up. "We ourselves groan within ourselves" till we see them again. But we shall see them lovelier than before, but still the same, more ours, more His, the needful absence for the needful work done, no absence more, all ours and all one for ever. Wait on; He hears the groans of the waiting.—Dean Vaughan.

Hope.

"We are saved by hope."—Romans 8:24.

St. Paul says that there are three things which abide, three things, that

is, which last under all the changes of fashion and of custom, and of the varying schemes of different generations—three things which remain as the abiding strands of the human character, and of those the first is faith, and the second is hope. When we consider hope we are brought face to face with this—that hope differs from faith inasmuch as it suffers from not being taken seriously, as faith is. Even those who feel most their lack of faith know that faith is an essential; they know that without faith it is impossible to please God. But with Hope it is all different. We look upon Hope, do we not? as a kind of beautiful fairy queen, and where Hope is so beautiful we are apt to think she can do no useful work. It is a calumny on Hope to look on her as a merely beautiful fairy queen. Hope is a nurse. Hope is a worker. Hope is a most delightful and sustaining intellectual friend. What, then, is the peculiar power of Hope?

I. The first thing which we notice about Hope—and she wants watching to find out the peculiar magic of her power—is that she purifies the human character. "He that hath this hope," says St. John, "purifies himself even as Christ is pure."

II. Or, again, not only has Hope this purifying power, not only will it make us believe that we are meant to live with angels and not herd with animals, not only will it lift a man into a different state of mind altogether, and purify his character, but also Hope is the strongest influence that we can exert over other people. Have Hope in the schoolroom, have Hope in the drawing-room, have Hope in the worship, and Hope, you will find, will draw out all that is best in those you love, and mould them by her wonderful power into your ideal of them.

III. Hope is the greatest inspirer of corporate work. You have seen sometimes the summer breeze sway

down the cornstalks in a great field, they all bow beneath its magic power; that is how souls are bowed down by the influence of Hope. One hopeful man will save a garrison; one hopeful woman will inspire a parish. What we want in all our work, in all our corporate work, is not less hope, but more hope.—Bishop Winnington-Ingram.

The Holy Spirit's Intercession.

"*The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.*"—Romans 8:26.

I. *The Help Which the Holy Ghost Gives.*—If in time of trouble a man can pray, his burden loses its weight. But sometimes we are in such confusion of mind that we know not what we should pray for as we ought. We see the disease, but the name of the medicine is not known to us. When we know the matter of prayer, we yet fail to pray in a right manner. Coming to our aid in our bewilderment—1. He instructs us. "He shall teach you all things." He instructs us as to our need, and as to the promises of God which refer to that need. 2. He often directs the mind to the special subject of prayer. We sometimes find our minds carried as by a strong under-current into a particular line of prayer for some one definite object. It is not merely that our judgment leads us in that direction, though usually the Spirit of God acts upon us by enlightening our judgment, but we often feel an unaccountable and irresistible desire rising again and again within our heart. 3. He Himself "maketh intercession for us"; not that He ever groans or personally prays, but He excites intense desire and unutterable groanings in us, and these are ascribed to Him; even as Solomon built the temple because he superintended and ordained all. 4. He strengthens the faith of

believers. That faith is at first of His creating, and afterwards it is of His sustaining and increasing. 5. In this whole matter the Spirit acts—
 (1) As a prompter to a reciter. (2) As an advocate to one in peril at law.
 (3) As a father aiding his boy.

II. The Prayer Which the Holy Spirit Inspires.—The prayers which are indited in us by the Spirit of God are—1. Those which arise from our inmost soul. A man's heart is moved when he groans. 2. Such prayers will rise within us when the mind is far too troubled to let us speak. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, and then it is that we groan. Hezekiah said, "Like a crane or a swallow did I chatter." The Psalmist said, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." 3. They sometimes concern such great things that they cannot be spoken. If it were some little thing, my narrow capacity could comprehend and describe it, but I need all covenant blessings. But it may be that we groan because we are conscious of the littleness of our desire and the narrowness of our faith. The trial, too, may seem too mean to pray about. 4. They are prayers of knowledge. Notice, our difficulty is that we know not what we should pray for; but the Holy Spirit does know, and therefore He helps us by enabling us to pray intelligently, knowing what we are asking for. The text speaks of the "mind of the Spirit." What a mind that must be! And it is seen in our intercessions when under His sacred influence we order our case before the Lord, and plead with holy wisdom for things convenient and necessary. 5. They are prayers offered in a proper manner. The Spirit works in us humility, earnestness, intensity, importunity, faith, and resignation, and all else that is acceptable to God in our supplications. We know not how to mingle these scared spices in the incense of prayer. If left to ourselves, we get too much of

one ingredient or another and spoil the sacred compound, but the Holy Spirit's intercessions have in them such a blessed blending of all that is good that they come up as a sweet perfume before the Lord. 6. They are only in the saints.

III. The Sure Success of All Such Prayers.—1. There is a meaning in them which God reads and approves. When the Spirit of God writes a prayer upon a man's heart, the man himself may be in such a state of mind that he does not altogether know what it is. His interpretation of it is a groan, and that is all. Yet our heavenly Father, who looks immediately upon the heart, reads what the Spirit of God has indited there. "He knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." Did not Jesus say, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things before you ask them"? 2. They are "the mind of the Spirit." God is one, and therefore it cannot be conceived without profanity, that anything could be the mind of the Holy Spirit and not be the mind of the Father and of the Son. If, therefore, the Holy Spirit move you to any desire, then His mind is in your prayer, and it is not possible that the eternal Father should reject your petitions. 3. They are according to the will or mind of God, for He never maketh intercession in us other than is consistent with the Divine will.—C. H. Spurgeon.

Foreknowledge and Predestination.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Romans 8:29, 30.

One rarely ventures, or even dares, to preach from this text now, although he may have been preaching half a lifetime. And that itself is an indication of the change which has passed over religious thought, and of the transference of our affections from speculative doctrines to things more practical. The texts which our fathers loved, which they regarded as the very cream, honey and gold of the Gospel, have been wellnigh banished from the pulpit. The themes on which they meditated and conversed with inexhaustible curiosity and delight would provoke nothing but drowsiness and impatience in a modern congregation.

Moreover, we are decidedly shy of such texts as this, because they were once made the battle-ground of hostile creeds, and wrangled over by Calvinist and Arminian until all the sweet life-blood was let out of them, and their true meaning hidden in the blinding dust which the strife stirred up. That strife is dead now, wellnigh as dead as an Egyptian mummy, and we have almost buried the texts which supplied its weapons in the grave thereof. Yet surely St. Paul had a noble thought in these words if we could only read it with fresh, unbiased minds, and deliver it from all the hard and unlovely misconceptions with which it has been loaded.

I. *"For Whom He Did Foreknow, He Also Did Predestinate."* It was an awful doctrine which our fathers found in these words: that a privileged few were foreordained from all eternity to enjoy the favour of God and the raptures of heaven for ever, and that all the rest, the vast majority, were created and sent into the world with their terrible destiny fixed by unchangeable decree, pre-doomed to reprobation and everlasting pains. It seems inconceivable to us that such a thought of God could be held, as it was, by good and tender-hearted men who had sat at the feet of Jesus, and

saw the pity and love-light in His eyes. It would hardly be possible to name it now without producing a shudder, and a fierce revolt of indignant emotion against the monstrous injustice and cruelty of the thing. It has gone for ever, driven out, slain, and extinguished by the gentler thoughts of a nobler and more Christ-like faith.

Whatever St. Paul meant, we feel that he could not mean that, and even if he did we should decline to follow him. We should hold to the justice and mercy of God, in spite of all. But what the great apostle had in mind was something vastly different from that. He declares here that God, from the first, had a vision of a nobler race of men, who would be sons of God indeed, who would be chosen and called to share the mind of Christ and be His witnesses among men. God, who foresaw and predestined the Incarnation, the gift of His well-beloved Son to the world, and that life of spotless purity and matchless sorrow, foresaw and predestined also that there should gather round this Christ men after His own heart, swayed with the same purpose, who should be themselves Christs on a smaller scale, so that, instead of one Son of God, there should be many, and that He, the great Forerunner, should be as the Firstborn among many brethren. That is St. Paul's idea of election, and the Divine idea of election which runs through all the sacred writings; and every other idea of election is but a travesty and a caricature of that. There is no mention here of a favouritism which sets a few apart for the enjoyment of heavenly bliss. That may be implied as an after-result, but if St. Paul was thinking of that at all it was quite a secondary thought.

II. *The Purpose of the Predestination Was to Shape Men in the Image of Jesus Christ*, for toil and work and patient endurance in this world,

and to bestow upon them spiritual gifts and graces, that they might labour and suffer for, and guide and lead, their fellow-men as He did. "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ."

III. He Called Them Out, Says the Apostle, To Be Made Like Christ, and Then He Justified Them; and, Finally, Those Whom He Justified He Also Glorified. And if we were here to follow the old lines of thought, we would have to talk about effectual and final calling, and justification by faith, and imputed righteousness, and complete sanctification, and the crowns of glory which are reserved for the elect. But I would rather get behind all that doctrinal phraseology to the simpler and far greater thoughts which were passing through the apostle's mind. Surely he meant that the men who are formed in the image of Christ and called out to do the works of Christ are justified by God, though the world perhaps does them no justice at all. Scant justice did the Lord of all get save from the Father who sent Him and the few disciples who believed in Him. He was tried at Pilate's bar and the world's bar, and convicted of madness, foolishness, and even crime. Scant justice did those who followed Him get from princes and rulers, and the blind multitude who were swayed by those rulers. We read often that they were denounced as madmen, hunted as criminals, despised, hated, and cast out as the off-scouring of the earth. No wonder St. Paul fell back, as his Master had done, on the larger justification of unerring wisdom and love: "Whom He called, them He also justified."

Every sufferer for righteousness, every holy martyr, every patient saint, every earnest life spent in tearful services and in works of love, is gradually revealed. They cannot be hidden always. They may be covered for a while by prejudice and pride,

calumny and rejection, but the soul that is beautiful in God's sight becomes beautiful at length in the eyes of all men. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day."

And so these words of St. Paul, which have been made to do such ill service by men who fought over the body and shell of them and lost the spirit—these words come again to us with all their sweet significance and present-day application: "Whom he predestinated, them he also called, and justified, and glorified."—J. G. Greenhough.

Predestination.

"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called."—Romans 8: 30.

The apostle is not here describing a chain of causes and effects, but simply showing the method in which God works; the order in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other. This will be clear if we survey the work of God in the salvation of men—

I. *Forward.*—1. God foreknew all who would believe—i.e., speaking after the manner of men, for properly there is neither fore or after knowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity, is present to Him at once. But we must not think that things are because He knows them, any more than the sun shines because I see it. Men are as free in believing or not believing as if God did not know it at all. 2. Whom God foreknew He "predestinated," etc.—i.e., God decrees from everlasting that all who believe in the Son of His love shall be conformed to His image. Accordingly all who believe in Christ receive "the end of their faith, the

salvation of their souls," and this in virtue of the unchangeable decree, "He that believeth shall be saved," etc. 3. Whom He predestinated He also called—outwardly by His Word, inwardly by His Spirit. 4. Whom He called He justified—i.e., here, made just. He executed the decree, "conforming them to the image of His Son," or sanctified them. 5. Whom He justified He glorified. "Having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints," He "gives them the kingdom prepared for them."

II. *Backward.*—1. Take your stand with "the multitude which no man can number," and you will find none who was not sanctified before he was glorified. 2. Take a view of the sanctified on earth and you will find all were first called. 3. Who are they that are thus called but those whom God had predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, "for God calls none, but according to the counsel of His will." 4. All God predestinated He foreknew. He saw them as believers, and as such predestinated them to salvation according to the eternal decree. "He that believeth shall be saved." Conclusion: God sees and knows from everlasting to everlasting through one eternal *now*. Yet in condescension to our weakness He speaks after the manner of men of His purpose, counsel, plan, foreknowledge.—John Wesley.

Predestination and Calling.

"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called."—Romans 8:30.

The book of God's decrees is closed against the curiosity of man. "The lion of the tribe of Judah 'only' hath prevailed to open the book and break the seven seals thereof." How then

am I to know whether I am predestinated or no? Until this question be answered my heart cannot rest. The answer is that God has published that page of the sacred decree whereon the character of the predestinated is recorded in His Word: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And if thou be called, it follows as a natural inference thou are predestinated. There are two kinds of callings. The first is the general call, which is given to every one that heareth the Word (Isa. 55:1; Prov. 8:4); but the call of the text is personal. It is one that is heard and obeyed. Note:—

I. *Illustrations of the Call.*—1. It is precisely similar to the case of Lazarus. The sinner is dead in sin. Sovereign mercy comes and cries, "Come forth!" and that man lives. "Well," cries one, "but what are the words which Christ uses when He calls a sinner from death?" Why, any words. There came unto this hall a man to whom the simple reading of the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," was the means of his quickening. He said within himself, "Does Jesus love me? then I must love Him." 2. While the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive enough to oppose God, as we see in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Let Peter say, "Saul, why dost thou oppose Christ? The time shall come when thou shalt yet be His disciple," and Saul would laugh him to scorn. But when Christ dealt with him, he fell to the ground, and in a few days the persecutor becomes the preacher. 3. The effectual call may be illustrated in its sovereignty by the case of Zaccheus. There were many better men in the city than he. Why call him? Simply because the call of God comes to unworthy sinners. 4. To illustrate this call in its effects, take the case of Abraham. What a trial to Abraham's faith when he had to leave all that was so dear to him, and go he knew not whither!

And yet God had a goodly land for him, and intended greatly to bless him. 5. When effectual calling comes to a man, at first he may not know it. You remember the case of Samuel, who mistook God's voice for Eli's.

II. And Now as a Matter of Examination Let Each Man Judge Himself by Certain Characteristics of the Calling. It is—1. A holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). If you are living in sin, you are not called. 2. A high calling (Phil. 3:13, 14). Has then your calling lifted up your heart and set it upon things above? 3. A heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). Is thy calling a call to heaven as well as from heaven? 4. A call, not to the righteous, but to sinners. 5. A call out of darkness into God's marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). 6. A call to liberty (Gal. 5:15). 7. A call to the fellowship of Christ (1. Cor. 1:9).

III. Consolation.—1. If I am called, then I am predestinated, there is no doubt about it. The scheme of salvation is like the chain which we see at horse-ferries, fixed into one staple on this side of the river, and into another at the other side, but the greater part of the chain is under water. You only see it as the boat moves on, and as the chain is drawn out of the water by the force that propels the boat. I can see that part of the chain, which is named "calling," but blessed be God, that is joined to the side that is called "election," and to the side called "glorification." 2. If a man be called, he will certainly be saved at last (11:29).—C. H. Spurgeon.

Freedom of God's Election

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."—Romans 8:18.

They had been so highly privileged, and were yet cast out. Oh, what a

fall was there! But had God's promise come to naught? Nay, verily. For, as the history of their ancestry showed, the purposed working out of God's plans for the salvation of the world—for which alone Israel had been chosen—was not committed rigidly to all Israel, but only to such of them as God should choose. And, in this matter of choosing, God was perfectly free. This freedom is illustrated by the apostle from the election of former times.

I. God's Purpose for the World.—A Creator's love must embrace his whole creation; a Father's must go forth towards all his children. God is the Father of mankind, even though all have fallen away from him; any purpose of salvation must, therefore, comprehend all men in its wide scope, and only the wilfulness of man can prevent the perfect accomplishment of the purpose. God has purposed the redemption of the world in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:11), but by reason of man's debasement through sin the accomplishment of the purpose must needs be gradual. One great central work shall be wrought—God's work through Christ; but up towards this the avenue of preparatory work must lead, and away from this the avenue of fulfilment must conduct. An education of the world; a great power of salvation; a world-wide application of the power.

II. An Elect People.—The election dealt with in these chapters, which has no reference whatever to the election of individuals for eternal salvation, was the election of a people who should conduct the world towards Christ by way of preparation, and afterwards conduct Christ's power to the world by way of application. In the matter of preparation, an exclusion of this people from others was needful first, because of the abounding corruptions of the world. Sometimes this is the only safety: "Come out, and be separate!"

But a scattering was needful afterwards. So the captivities, overruled by God; so the dispersion in later times. In the subsequent evangelisation there must be concentration first, that the new power of life might be fully realised; a scattering afterwards, that the new power might touch the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 8:4).

III. The Freedom of the Election.—But surely, in such a work of grace, God's hands cannot be tied? surely He may choose whom He will for the great purpose of the world's salvation? Even so. We can conceive nothing other; and the history of the past abundantly illustrates the freedom with which God has worked. First, God chose Abraham; the Jews would not complain of His freedom of election here. Again, of Abraham's sons He chose the later-born, showing that the matter of priority of natural claims could not weigh with Him. And of Isaac's twin-sons, before their birth, He chose again the later-born, Jacob, showing that nothing done by the elected one constituted a claim on His electing grace. Neither the Ishmaelites nor the Edomites were rejected of God from personal salvation, but as regarded taking a special part in the work of the world's salvation they were reprobate. So, then, God had acted freely in the choice of Abraham, and in the narrowing down of the election among Abraham's seed. Was it to be wondered at that, in the fulness of the times, he should act freely still, and elect only a remnant of the people to the work of evangelising the world? This work so soon to be entrusted also to Gentile workers themselves.

The same principle still holds good: God elects us, according to His sovereign will, for work in His kingdom. Let us learn, as the first lesson, absolute submission; nay, the unquestioning fealty of love.—T. F. Lockyer.

The Doctrine of Election.

"A remnant according to the election of grace."—Romans 11:5.

The argument of the three chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, the reading of which we conclude this morning, is one of the most difficult of the Bible. It suggests problems concerning the moral government of God which perplex, if they do not appal, the mind which entertains them.

I. Now it was one of those deep problems that confronted the mind of St. Paul when he had surrendered to the victorious Christ and had been received into the fellowship of His disciples in the Straight Street in Damascus. Never for a moment did he waver in his allegiance to the exalted Nazarene or doubt the reality of the vision, to which from the first he had not been disobedient. But the blinding of his natural sight in the early hours of his new and startling experience was typical of that readjustment of focus which the strange and marvellous fact, thrust thus unexpectedly into his spiritual consciousness, demanded of the exclusive Pharisee when he found himself called to be a universal missionary to the nations. He had now to meet the prejudice which hitherto he had shared. If Jesus, with His subversive claim, were indeed the Messiah, as by his conviction no less than by his allegiance he was now bound to declare Him, why this obstinate rejection on the part of Israel itself? This is a problem which must present itself under various aspects in every age to the followers of the Crucified, when they are brought face to face, as we are in Manchester to-day, with the stubborn, persistent fact of the Hebrew race, which, thrusting itself into our commerce, our government, our social life, yet maintains the identity of its exclusive customs, its wor-

ship of the God of Abraham, its obstinate refusal of the cross of Christ. No one can ignore the Hebrew people. No one can deny to them a zeal of God which puts many Christians to shame, a genius for religion which makes it the crowning characteristic of the race. No attitude towards them is more unworthy of the philosopher or the historian than that antipathy which is the sad inheritance of centuries nominally Christian, and with which the Gentile has abundantly repaid the proud superiority of the Jew.

II. If we are to understand the argument by which St. Paul vindicates the righteousness of God in His dealings with the chosen people, we must first of all be in sympathy with his spiritual apprehension of the power and love of Christ. Those whose faith is an inherited tradition rather than a living experience may well rise from the problems of the world's religious beliefs in the spirit of intellectual scepticism. God's purpose of love must first of all meet you, my brother, in the practical issues of your personal life before you can discuss its methods and its mystery in relation to the universal history of mankind. By the very limitations of your human destiny which involve you in the responsibilities for which God calls you to account, the sins for which Christ atones, the guilt from which the cross redeems, you are precluded from occupying the position of the impartial critic of the relations between God and His world. St. Paul only began to write the ninth chapter of the Romans when he had finished the wonderful eighth. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Only when he had received the assurance for himself that to them that are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation did the message of the redemptive love for the world shed the light

of its benediction over the tangled story of the painful earth. So the rejection of God's ancient people is itself luminously explained by the apostle, as evidence not of the caprice, still less of the impotence, of a faithless Creator, but of those unfailing methods which in every age have marked the progress of God's universal purpose of redemption.

1. And first there is the Divine method of selection. God works "according to election." God is choosing every day, every hour, every moment. Two men are in one bed; two women grinding at the mill; one is taken, the other left. And it is this selective method of Divine working which St. Paul sees in the ancient history of Israel. God never gives away the mode in which He will be true to His own promises. He is able of the very stones to raise up children to Abraham. That is what he means when he compares the story of Jacob and Esau. Children of one birth—surely they, at least, might claim an equal share in the blessing of Abraham. But, even when St. Paul wrote, the facts of history were irrefragable. And to-day the Bedouin scours the barren sand, the hand of the Israelite is on the forces which move the world. We are always telling our Lord God how He must fulfill His Word, and He is always disappointing our faithless and unfounded claim.

2. The second principle of Divine action upon which St. Paul insists is the old prophetic teaching of the remnant. This again is universal in its application. The infallibility of majorities is no more a fact of the eternal order than the Divine right of kings. If Cæsar is not Divine, neither is the voice of the people the voice of God. A critical investigation of the contents of Christianity, an impartial view of the origins of the Church, reveal its character, not as a protest against the Hebrew pol-

ity, but as a true and legitimate expansion of the commonwealth of Israel. And what would Christianity have been without that spiritual genius which passed with the faithful remnant across the breach which Christ had made in the middle wall of partition which separated the Gentile from the household of God? A shallow estimate of missionary effort as a narrow commercial enterprise is content to measure values in the kingdom of God by repeating the unworthy statement that it costs £2,000 to convert a Jew. Two thousand pounds! Why, it cost a miracle to convert St. Paul, but the work was cheap at the price. Millions have had reason to give thanks for the "remnant according to the election of grace." That remnant is the promise of the future which St. Paul himself greeted from afar. "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!"

3. And lastly, the act by which God redeems is an act of grace. The power of the cross, its immense claim on the adoring gratitude of the children of men, is the wonder of the free favour of a loving Father which is there displayed. "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us."—J. G. Simpson.

Sanctification.

"Sanctified by the Holy Ghost."—
Romans 15:16.

There are some who preach a salvation from sin's consequences; but you and I want to be delivered from sin's tyranny; that is much more than being delivered from hell, from the consequences of sin. Some people look upon salvation as a kind of life-buoy by whose aid they may enter safely into the harbour of heaven;

but salvation is far more than that. The salvation which God offers you and me is not only to free us from the penalty of sin—the consequences of sin—but also from the power of sin. "He shall save his people, his redeemed ones, from their sins." When we put our faith in Christ and Him crucified, we are saved eternally and completely, because "He hath redeemed us with an eternal redemption." But I want to live for Christ. I do not only want to die a Christian death, but to live for Christ here, to show forth in my life the power of Christ; I want Christ to be formed in me. This is sanctification and the work of God the Holy Ghost. The cross means for us not only deliverance from sin, but it means the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I. The first work of the Holy Spirit in the redeemed soul is the *work of cleansing, of purifying*. It is the mission of God the Holy Ghost to come into the heart of the believer and purify the very "springs of being" that have been poisoned by sin, so that out of us shall flow pure and life-giving streams, and we shall be a blessing to others because of the outflow of the Holy Ghost that dwelleth within us.

II. But there is not only the thought of cleansing, there is the *thought of strengthening*. He is the Comforter. The word "comforter" means one who stands by your side to strengthen you (the Paraclete), to help you. In the margin of the Revised Version the word "helper" is used—one ever at our side to help us in living the Christian life. We not only want inward cleansing, we want comforting, cheering; we want a champion—some one has translated the word "Paraclete" as "champion"—one who stands for our defence.

III. Again, there is not only the cleansing of the Holy Ghost, and the comforting of the Holy Ghost, but

there is the gift of courage to witness for God. This is a special gift of the blessed Spirit. Think of what happened at Pentecost. Think of the cowardly nature of Peter, then look

at him after the baptism of fire, after the cleansing fire had gone through his soul and burned out all the fear. It is no good talking religion unless you are living true.—T. J. Madden.

1 CORINTHIANS

The True Foundation of Character.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—1 Corinthians 3:11.

Nothing is so important to man as his moral character. (1) It is that alone which he can call his own. He has produced it, no one else. (2) It is that alone which determines his real worth. As is his character, so is he before God and the universe. (3) It is that alone which decides his destiny. Out of it will bloom his Eden or flame his hell. (4) It is that alone which he carries with him beyond the grave. Friends, property, and even his own body he leaves behind, but character he bears with him into the vast unknown. The passage suggests certain important thoughts concerning character.

I. *That There Is an Analogy Between the Formation of Character and the Erection of a Building.* "If any man build," etc. The process of character-forming is spoken of in the Bible sometimes under the figure of a journey, sometimes under the figure of a battle, sometimes under the figure of tillage. Here it is spoken of under the figure of a building. It is like a building in three respects.

First: In the variety of its materials. Buildings are generally formed, not of one material, but of several. "Stone, wood, iron," etc. Moral character is built up by a great variety of things—the impressions that are made on us; the emotions that rise in us; the thoughts that pos-

sess us; the volitions we pass; all, in fact, that in any way affects us, goes to construct this character.

Secondly: In the unity of its design. Every building, however varied its materials, is formed on some plan. One design shapes the whole. So with character. The master-purpose of the soul—and every man has a master-purpose—whatever it may be, gives unity to the whole.

Thirdly: In the function it fulfills. Buildings are generally residences of some kind or other. The soul lives in the character. It is its home. In some cases the home is the mere sty of the animal; in some, the shop of the barterer; in some, the prison of the guilty; in some, the temple of the saint.

II. *That Christ Is the Only Foundation of a True Character.* "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." There are sometimes splendid edifices and poor foundations, and the reverse. All characters are based upon some one idea.

First: Some are based on the sensual idea:—Such as that on which the prodigal started—such as that on which Dives built his all. Millions now do the same. What shall we eat, what shall we drink? is the grand inquiry.

Secondly: Some are based on the secular idea. On this Judas, the young lawyer, and Demas built; and on this thousands build now.

Thirdly: Some are based on the ambitious idea. Absalom, Haman, Herod, are examples of this. Such,

too, are the Alexanders and Napoleons of general history.

Fourthly: Some are based on the Christian idea. What is that? Supreme sympathy with God; and this requires Christ for its existence. It cannot exist without Christ. Christ is its foundation, for He does the two things to generate the supreme sympathy in souls. (1) Demonstrates to man the propitiableness of God. (2) Reveals to man the moral loveliness of God. Thus He is the true foundation.

III. That to Christ as a Foundation Men Bring Worthless as Well as Valuable Materials. "Some build edifices of gold, silver, precious stones," and some "wood, hay, stubble."

First: There are edifices partially formed of "wood, hay, stubble." The mere creedal character is worthless. There are those whose Christianity is a mere matter of creed, a thing of idea, nothing more. Mere sentimental character is worthless. There are those whose Christianity is a mere matter of feeling, a thing of frames and feelings. Mere ritualistic character is worthless. There are those whose Christianity is a mere matter of form. All these characters are formed of "wood, hay, stubble"; things of no solidity, no value, no duration.

Secondly: There are edifices entirely formed of "gold, silver, precious stones." The heart is in vital sympathy with Christ, as the Atoner for sin, the Exemplar of holiness, the Saviour of the world. The profoundest thoughts, the strongest sympathies, the gold and silver of the soul, are connected with Christ.

IV. That There Is an Era to Dawn When All the Edifices Built on This Foundation Shall Be Tried. "Every man's work shall be made manifest." The day. Heaven has appointed a day for testing character. Individually, it is the day that dawns at the end of our mortal life. Uni-

versally, it is the day that dawns at the end of this world's history. This will be a day of fire. The fire of absolute justice and truth will burn to the centre of all souls, consuming all that is worthless.

First: This day will be injurious to those who have built on this foundation with worthless materials. (1) They will suffer loss. There will be the loss of labor, the loss of opportunity, the loss of position. (2) Though they suffer loss they may be saved. "Saved, yet so as by fire." Though his favourite theories and cherished hopes shall burn like wood and hay, yet he himself may survive the flames.

Secondly: This day will be advantageous to those who have built on this foundation with right materials. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon he shall receive a reward."—David Thomas.

Man a Steward.

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."—1 Corinthians 4:2.

Notice three things—

I. The Trust Implied.

Of what are we stewards? All, in fact, that we are and have, but sin. Health, reason, property, influence, etc., etc. "All things, O Lord, come of Thee," etc., etc. This trust is:

1. Undeniable. The moral reason of humanity binds man to acknowledge that all he has he holds in trust. He is not the proprietor, but the trustee.

2. Ever-increasing. Mercies increase every hour, and with the increase obligation accumulates.

II. The Trust Discharged.

A good man uses all under a sense of his responsibility to God. The true servant loves his Master, regards him-

self as honoured by that Master's love to him, and he regards all which that Master entrusts to him as a good steward of his Lord's property, and aims to lay it out for his interest in the manner he has commanded; I say, that whatever he does, he will aim to do all for the glory of God. In the right discharge of this trust man (1) Blesses himself. (2) Serves his generation. (3) Wins the approbation of his God.

III. *The Trust Abused.*

We read of some 1. That waste their Lord's goods. 2. That are unprofitable servants. "Many will say unto me in that day."—J. Harding.

The Body a Temple.

"*Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?*"—I Cor. 6:19.

Let us ask how as Christian people we ought to look upon our bodies, and what new light is shed upon their part in life through the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ.

I. *First Note the Dignity of the Body.* The text informs us what the Apostle believed about that. He has no hesitation in saying that these bodies of ours are temples of the Holy Ghost, or, as he puts it a verse or two before, "members of Christ." Think what that metaphor of the temple meant. There had been a temple in Israel before, all compact of ivory and gold and marble; and not many years were to pass, from the date of this letter, till its hour struck and it passed away. But, ere it fell, its place had been taken by the redeemed personalities in which Christ was dwelling. So St. Paul's argument is very simple—only this: God inhabits us; we inhabit our bodies; therefore our bodies are God's temple. Though he had laboured the point for page on page, he could have added nothing to

the solemn emphasis of that one word—the body a Divine temple.

Let us lay the truth to heart, that Christ has redeemed both parts of our nature, and that His will for us covers both the material and the spiritual. The body has its own share in the great salvation. Certain ancient philosophers and some Christian thinkers who ought to have known better have tended to despise the body; they have heaped abuse upon it, as the jail and prison of the soul; but the one fact of Christ's coming in the flesh has swept away all such shame and contempt and poured honour upon every member. Wherever His Gospel has penetrated, it has taught men a sweet and beautiful reverence even for the bodies of the dead. The nobility and sanctity of the human organism have been revealed in Jesus.

Moreover, if the body is redeemed, it is no longer our own, and has to be cared for as particularly as honesty bids us care for some one else's property. The guarding of health is a part of religion. To neglect or squander our bodily powers is to steal what belongs to God. As Charles Kingsley said once, and no man had a better right to speak: "There has always seemed to me something impious in the neglect of personal health. . . . I could not do half the good I do do, if it were not for the strength and activity some consider coarse and degrading."

II. *Note, Secondly, the Gravity of Bodily Sin.* Strictly speaking, this is the connection in which the text occurs. St. Paul is warning the Corinthians against the foul practices which made their city a byword and tainted every breath they drew. On that subject he does not argue. He simply bids them consider that their bodies are God's temples.

Where lies the gravity and guilt of sins like gluttony, intemperance, or lust in any form? In this, for one thing, that they give the body the

upper hand. The only right and safe thing is that the body shall always serve. Any attempt to reverse the Divine law of our nature, that that part of us which is akin to God must rule, means a loss of true manhood and inevitable suffering. Forget this, and the appetite which was but a means in the Divine plan comes to be an end in itself. "Hold off from sensuality," Cicero writes, "for if you once give yourself to it you will not be able to think of anything else." The body ceases to be the soul's instrument or servant, and becomes its dungeon, then its tomb; so that the drunkard reeling down the street is, in too many cases, a man whose body has already become the grave of a lost spirit.

Then again, bodily sin is so heinous because it defiles what Christ has redeemed. The reason why Christ's atoning passion was endured, and followed by triumphant resurrection, lay in God's great purpose that our human nature, in both its parts, should be cleansed and restored in beauty and purity. For this He bore the shame, the grief, the scourging, the spitting, the awful desolation of the last hour. The aim and issue of it all was that we should become a habitation of God through the Spirit. Gross sin in the body thwarts and defeats that purpose. Therefore it is to be feared and avoided by men and women who have a stake in the Divine redemption and know that God has called them unto holiness.

III. *Lastly, Note the Prospects of the Body.* What is supremely important here also is to fix in our minds that truth, that the body has its own real share in the hopes and promises that cluster round the name of Jesus. The heathen said—our modern heathen say still—the body will perish like the animals; what matters it how we treat it? let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Nay, replies Chris-

tian faith, there is a second and nobler chapter in the story even of the frail tenement we here inhabit, which sheds back its light upon the chapter we are living in now. God, who raised up Jesus, shall in due time also quicken your mortal bodies.—H. R. Mackintosh.

Lord's Supper and Personal Faith.

1 Corinthians 11:24.

The Lord's Supper is a great symbol. The bread broken symbolises that Jesus Christ, dying for our sins, has become the bread of life. The eating of the bread symbolises the faith of the communicant. Faith thus unites us and Christ inseparably; it gives us an inalienable possession of Christ. Faith then being on our side the great act of the Lord's Supper, let us note more particularly its action therein.

I. *We in the Lord's Supper Confess Our Faith.* "We make a confession," many say, "when we partake of the Lord's Supper." They seem to mean that we profess a certain sanctity, or a certain superiority. No; the Lord's Supper is not such a profession, it is rather the confession of our faith. He who partakes confesses he is unable of himself to attain salvation. "But," say others, "to partake of the Lord's Supper is to profess a great creed." It is certainly to profess a certain faith. But it is a confession that is experimental, not dogmatic; practical, not theoretic.

II. *But the Confessing Involves the Exercising of Our Faith.* In the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ is most certainly present. His presence does not wait upon the consecrating word of priest. Christ is present as truly before as after the consecrating word of priest or minister. The communicant, discerning the Lord's presence and offer, does there and then receive

his Saviour, His truth and grace, His love and spirit.

III. This Being So, Our Third Position Follows, That in the Lord's Supper We Receive Nourishment to Our Faith. The silent, impressive appeal of the symbols, the communion of saints, the presence of the Lord, quicken our faith to appropriate and assimilate Jesus Christ, so that our spiritual man is nourished, as our body is, by partaking of its appropriate food. This nourishment, it must be noted, depends upon the activity of the faith of the communicant.

IV. In the Lord's Supper Our Faith Pledges Us Anew to Christ. If we confess, and exercise our faith in Christ, and receive spiritual nourishment in the Sacrament, our hearts involuntarily consecrate us anew to our blessed Lord. An act of consecration, therefore, should follow the partaking and be a part of the communion.—A. Goodrich.

Death of Christ.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."—1 Corinthians 15: 3.

Let us attempt to gather up some of the main teachings of the New Testament about the meaning of the death of Christ.

I. *Note the Central Place the Cross Occupies in the New Testament.* "All the light of sacred story," says Sir John Bowring, "gathers round its head sublime"; and so it does. It is the centre of gravity of the New Testament. For proof of what I say you need but turn to the Gospels and notice the space the Evangelists devote to the account of our Lord's Passion; you need but turn to the Acts and the Epistles and read the account of the apostolic preaching. Look at my

own text. "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received," says Apostle Paul, writing to his Corinthian converts, "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

"First of all." This took first rank; this was Paul's primary and central message.

And it was not Paul alone who gave the cross this central and primary place. In doing this he was only following the example of the other Apostles who were in Christ before him. You have but to turn to the Epistles of Peter and John and to the record of the apostolic preaching in the Book of the Acts to see that the other Apostles placed the emphasis exactly where Paul placed it. Indeed, in this very paragraph from which my text is taken Paul asserts that identity in emphasis in set and definite terms. This was no message which he had himself invented which Paul preached to the Corinthians. He delivered to them only what he had received. In preaching as he did he was at one with Peter, and John, and James, and the rest. "Whether it be I or they—so we preached, and so ye believed."

II. *Now, What Was It That the Apostles Saw in the Cross Which Led Them to Give It This Supreme and Central Place in Their Preaching?*

1. They saw in it, first, the final and consummate Revelation of the Divine Love.

2. And, secondly, the Apostles saw in the cross the Divine judgment upon sin.

3. Thirdly, the Apostles see in the cross of Christ the ground of pardon and forgiveness.

The Gospel story seems to succeed or to fail very much as the vicarious suffering of Christ is present in it or absent from it. You have heard the story of the Moravian missionaries to Greenland. For years they toiled in Greenland teaching the na-

tives about the Creation and the Fall, the Flood and the Dispersion, and so on, and all to no purpose. But one day John Beck read to a small company of them the old story of Christ's dying love. And one of them, Kaya-mak, with tears streaming down his face, said to him, "Tell it me once more, for I too would be saved." At last they had found the key to the Greenlanders' hearts.

And what happens in Greenland happens everywhere. In a little book entitled *Gospel Ethnology*, the author shows by a careful comparison of missionary enterprise for the past 170 years that what has been most effective to pierce through the callousness and prejudices of heathenism has been the story of the cross, the sufferings of the sinless Saviour proclaimed to men as the means of their pardon and acceptance with God. And what is seen abroad in heathen lands is seen also here at home.

The vicarious sacrifice of Christ is the only thing that meets the deepest needs of the heart.—J. D. Jones.

Concerning the Collection.

"*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Now concerning the collection.*"—1 Corinthians 15:55; 16:1.

The fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians is the country of the springs; the sixteenth opens with a glimpse of the river. The fifteenth is the country of the truth, fundamental Christian truth, in which our personal hopes and triumphs have their birth; with the opening of the sixteenth I catch a glimpse of the shining graces which are the happy issue of the truth.

I. *Look Away for a Moment to the Springs.* The Apostle is joyfully recounting our hopes and triumphs in Christ. "O death, where is thy sting?" To those in Christ death has no poison, only honey; its burden is sweetness rather than pain. I may lift my tearful eyes in hope and gaze along the "living way" into the prepared palace of the ageless life. And what is the import of this? It means that the possibilities of the individual life have been raised to the powers of the infinite. That is the glorious burden of chapter fifteen, the emancipation and enlargement of life in the risen Christ. Now see the beautiful succession, taking its rise in the last verse of chapter fifteen and emerging clearly into view in the first verse of chapter sixteen. The larger life is succeeded, say rather accompanied, by larger living.

II. *What Was the Occasion of This Collection?* There was a large body of poor Jews in Jerusalem who had eagerly received the Christ of God. For this they were excommunicated, outlawed, banned. But Christianity fostered humanity; faith evoked philanthropy; and from their fellow-believers in wider fields there flowed a steady stream of beneficence to alleviate their distress. The birth of Christianity was the birth of a new philanthropy.

III. *It Is This Vital Association That I Desire to Emphasise.* Truth and activity are related as springs and rivers. If we want the one to be brimming, we must not ignore the other. That was the cardinal and all-determining weakness of Robert Elsmere. He denied the Resurrection and all the specious and heartening truths which gather about it; and out of the dry, vacuous heart of its negation sought to educe a river of benevolent energy for the permanent enrichment of the race. "I will open rivers in high places!" and only when we have the "high places" in our life,

the enthroned and sovereign truths of atonement and resurrection, and the sublime and awful prospect of an unveiled immortality, only then will our life be a land of springs, musical with the sound of many waters, flowing with gladsome rivers to cheer and refresh the children of men.—J. H. Jowett.

Resurrection Body.

"With what body do they come?"
—1 Corinthians 15:35.

Observe here the contrast between other religious systems and Christianity. The most spiritual of Greek philosophers regarded man's body as a hopeless burden, a fatal clog on the soul; Christianity recognises this as partly true of the body in its present state, but asserts that these imperfections are neither necessary nor permanent; it looks forward with absolute confidence to a future state, in which the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, shall be transfigured and glorified, on the ground of the Resurrection of Christ.

The fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was not denied by the Corinthians; it made them Christians; they knew the Church was founded, not simply on a Saviour Who had died, but upon one Who had been raised from the dead by the power of God.

St. Paul restates this fact, reaffirms two great truths involved—Christ died; Christ had risen; he marshals his evidence, and witnesses: Cephas, the Twelve, a surviving majority out of five hundred, St. James—all these had seen the risen Christ.

This is the Gospel which saves, awakens, and maintains the spiritual life. But, as he pressed home the issues of the Resurrection, doubts and difficulties arose; questions asked by inquiring minds: "How are the dead

raised up? With what manner of body do they come?" What the process, what the result of the Resurrection?

The early belief in the Resurrection was not a stupid credulity. The Corinthians were intellectual, the objections natural then and natural now. As we have stood by the open grave we have known their force, and often asked ourselves, "With what body do they come?" Will the child rise a child? the old man an old man? the cripple maimed? the blind sightless? Will the Resurrection body be of the same material and form, only reconstructed? Is this the Christian faith? If not, "With what body do they come?"

The Apostle meets these objections by analogy.

(Analogy does not, cannot demonstrate. This passage is not a proof of the Resurrection, nor intended to be so, but it meets certain difficulties impressively, powerfully; it argues that the laws in Nature have their counterpart in the spiritual world; that there is a unity throughout the system of the universe, and that the God of Grace and of Nature is one.)

I. "*Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God.*" There is no question, then, of re-gathering the particles of the dead body; "neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." None of the particles composing a human body seven years ago exist in that body to-day; they have passed into new combinations and forms.

St. Paul points us to the analogy of the seed and the plant: "Thou foolish one! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."

Here we have a parable of wondrous force and beautiful simplicity.

"With what manner of body do they come?"

Certainly not with the same body. The plant is entirely unlike the seed from which it sprang. The Resurrection body will not be the body which we now possess. The seed is not identical with the plant; it is the parent of the organism, the form of which is determined by God.

"So also is the Resurrection of the dead." The body is sown in corruption, liable to change, infirmity, dissolution; but "it is raised in incorruption." Proof against sickness and death; the glow of health throughout the ages. "It is sown in dishonour," in weakness—a natural body, frail and helpless, ruled by the senses; "it is raised in power," a spiritual body, a body fashioned anew.

II. Yet the Resurrection Body Will, in a Real Sense, Be Our Own Body. When clothed with it we shall be the same persons that we are now. The Thames is the same river now that it was a hundred years ago, flowing from the same source, created by the same force, coursing in the same channel; it is still the Thames, though not a drop of its water to-day was there ten years ago.

The old man to-day says: "I am the same person that I was twenty, fifty years ago; though not a single particle of my body is the same, yet I am the same." So in the Resur-

rection it will be our body, only the identity will not be that of form or of particles, but that of a permanent force and character which make it what it is and constitute its unity.

"God giveth it a body," remember, not as it pleaseth Him, "but as it pleased Him"—according to a certain law, which is His eternal will, that, through whatever changes the seed or germ of life should pass, something there shall be which shall connect its latest with its earliest stage.

III. The Resurrection Body Will Be the Manifested Expression of Ourselves. This, then, will be the Resurrection body—ourselves, essentially ourselves. We are perpetually judging men by what we have learned to call their "expression." We look into a face, and say, "There is kindness, sympathy, tenderness"; or, "There is pride, temper, passion, avarice." But we often judge wrongly; for this self-expression is, at present, imperfect; in the Resurrection body it will be full, complete, the perfect expression of the inmost spirit. According to the lives we live now we shall be hereafter. The character formed here will determine our future expression. Our very bodies will be our condemnation or our glory in that day. We shall then wear the garb of holiness or the livery of sin; and every man shall know, even as he is known.—J. Storrs.

2 CORINTHIANS

The Testimony of Our Conscience.

"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience."—2 Corinthians 1:12.

I. The Favourable Testimony of Conscience Is a Great Support in the Hour of Trial and Suffering.—Affliction brought upon us directly by our

own folly or sin is as wormwood for bitterness. Suffering is then greatly intensified by the reproaches of conscience. We feel that we are reaping only as we have sown. But when conscience acquits us we gain great moral support. The pressure of the heaviest burden is relieved; in the darkest day there is then some light. We may be "cast down," but we are

"not destroyed" (ch. 4:9). Sometimes the approval of conscience is enough to turn our sorrow into gladness and to lead us to rejoice when otherwise we should have greatly lamented. We may glory in this without vainglory. Paul was greatly comforted in his tribulations by a conscience which witnessed to the integrity of his conduct.

II. The Favourable Testimony of Conscience Can Be Secured Only by Holy Living.—1. Like the apostle, we must live in: (1) *Simplicity*. Singleness of purpose. Holiness: refraining from evil; walking ever before God. Though we shall not, it may be, be absolutely pure, we may abstain from all *wilful* transgression. (2) *Sincerity*. We must be true, honest, guileless, straightforward. Godly sincerity—*God-like* sincerity—*thorough*; a sincerity which comes from God. (3) *Not in fleshly wisdom*. A wisdom which has selfish aims, which is not particular about the means employed, a wisdom which ignores God. 2. This must apply to all our life. Our conversation in the world must be the same as in the Church. Some live double lives. It is no wonder that they have little peace of mind. Their conduct is ruled by *place* rather than *principle*. We must be the same amongst the enemies of God as amongst His friends.

III. We Can Live So as To Secure the Favourable Testimony of Conscience Only by the Grace of God.—We may "sear" conscience, dull it, so that its voice may be scarcely heard; but if free, unfettered, it will assuredly condemn unless we are in alliance with the Eternal. We cannot live a life of which the healthy conscience will approve apart from Him. We may lay down excellent plans for life, but we shall have to lay them down unless we get strength from the Strong One. The apostle had to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). Of ourselves

we can do nothing—except sin. Our sufficiency is of Him. He causes us to triumph. We cause ourselves to fail. We can walk "*in the grace of God*" only "*by the grace of God*."—E. Hurndall.

Atonement.

"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Corinthians 5:15.

"Christ died for the ungodly." Yes, but what is meant by "to die"? The word "death" is a cardinal word in the New Testament Scriptures. It enshrines a primary fact, out of which a great gospel is born. The fact takes first rank. All other proclamations must find their significance in this. "Christ died for our sins." Launch the question—What is death? and the thought of the ninety and nine will immediately gather round about a body, a coffin, a graveyard.

We misinterpret death if we allow the body to determine our thought. Our first step must be to place this clamorous flesh in the rear. Death is not primarily, but only very secondarily, an affair of the flesh. This is our Master's teaching. You must have repeatedly noticed that what we ordinarily call death our Master insisted upon calling sleep. You will remember that when He came to the ruler's house, and one gave Him the intelligence that the little daughter was dead, the Master made the surprising declaration, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth."

You will remember, too, the family at Bethany. Jesus heard of the black terror which had invaded their home and He used the same expression, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."

Here, then, is a suggestive indication of the Master's mind. What too

often constitutes our entire conception of death scarcely entered into Christ's conception at all. What we call death, Christ named sleep. The word death must be kept in the rear to suggest some other experience of awful and unspeakable import.

Now, let us advance a farther step. The Master repeatedly declares that He came to save us from that which He calls death. "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." Insert the common interpretation of the word death in that phrase, and the sentence becomes a dark confusion. "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." But the saintliest among us we have to carry their remains over the same well-trodden way to the cemetery. But do they die? Nay, nay, they only sleep.

It cannot be repeated too often, or emphasised too often, or emphasised too strongly, that what we call death is to Christ our Lord not death at all. It is only sleep, and He came not to save us from sleep, but to deliver us from death. We shall all sleep, saints and sinners alike; but we shall not all die: for if any man keep the word of the Christ he shall never see death; he is passed from death unto life; he abideth for ever.

But my text tells me that "Christ died." He did more than sleep; He died! What, then, was the Saviour's death? What do we commonly mean when we speak of the death of Christ? We fix our eyes upon Calvary. We see the crucified body. And we call that the death of Christ. That physical cessation we call the death. If the physical cessation were sleep, what was the Saviour's death? Since the crucifixion of the Master, hosts of His disciples have been similarly crucified, and have shared His bloody martyrdom. Like their Master, they slept; unlike their Master, they do not die. "Christ died." What was the Saviour's death?

Says the simple narrative, "He be-

gan to be sorrowful and very heavy." Shall we insert these words in place of those that have become almost too familiar to us? "He began to be desolate and very homeless." Let us pause there. "Very homeless!" He who only a few hours before had spoken so comfortably about His Father's house with the many mansions, and who on the self-same day had joyfully proclaimed the unfailing presence and companionship of His Father—"I am not alone, my Father is with me"—was now becoming burdened with the oppressive sense of homelessness. I think that was the beginning of the dying. He was beginning to taste death!

Go a little farther into the garden, and listen to the Master's agonised speech. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Desolation unto death! That is the wailing moan of the Saviour's soul. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Is he afraid of the Cross? Nay, nay, a thousand times nay; He fears not the sleep, but, oh, He does shrink from the death! Over His soul there is gathering and deepening a midnight darkness and desolation to which no other name can be given but the name of death. On now to Calvary, and let us hear the words in which the sense of desolation and homelessness deepens into an unspeakable and unthinkable intensity! "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That was death. What would follow would be only sleep. That was death—appalling midnight in the soul. That was death—the Father's house obscured, the Father's hand vanished, and the Son of God in the outer darkness, in the agonies of a consuming loneliness! That was death—the sinless Saviour out there in the night, in the abandonment which is the "wages of sin." What we call death, Christ called sleep. "Christ died."

It is a law, fixed and unchanging, "the law of sin and death." But the

Scriptures affirm that in Christ Jesus I come under the dominion of another law—the “law of the spirit of life”—and by this I am freed from the sovereignty of “the law of sin and death.” Under “the law of the spirit of life,” the lonely way of the outer darkness will never more be known.

Let me now call up for review some of the Master’s glowing promises. “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” He shall sleep, but he shall never know the outer darkness of separation and abandonment. “This is the bread which cometh down out of Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.” He shall sleep, but he shall never die. He shall never pass into the cold, chilling eclipse of a homeless desolation. We have been “reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” and in that Son death is abolished. There is “life for evermore.”

But now to me, and to all men, there is committed a great choice. I can choose to be one with Adam, or one with Christ; one under “the law of sin and death,” or one under “the law of the spirit of life.” I say the choice is ours, and we know it. If I make this the choice of my days—one with Thee, Thou deathless Christ, I shall never die. But if my life be a deliberate affront to the deathless Son of God, if I turn my back upon His grace—one with thee, thou man of sin—then I shall die, nay, even now I am dead, and the great day of unveiling shall reveal to me the appalling fact that I am homeless, desolate, separated by a “great gulf” from the “inheritance of the saints in light.” “These shall go into the outer darkness.”

Oh, pray that we may never know the death! I pray that we may only sleep. May the good Lord put us into a gentle sleep, and in the great awakening may we find ourselves not homeless, but at home, glad to be at home, glad to meet the deathless One,

and to see Him face to face!—J. H. Jowett.

Reconciliation in Christ.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.—2 Corinthians 5:19.

I. *“God Was in Christ.”* This truth, which the Apostle Paul profoundly believed, and which was the starting-point of all his thought upon the things of God, is supposed to be of all others the one peculiarly acceptable to religious minds to-day. From the first dawn of the Christian era each age has had its special theological fashion; for good or for evil, men have laid emphasis on some one side of Christian doctrine to the exclusion or the minimising of others. And these latter days have witnessed a widespread revival of belief in the Incarnation, as the most fundamental of all Christian verities. “That we only know God in Jesus Christ,” “that Christ has for us the religious value of God,” have become the new shibboleths of a great body of religious thinkers. We need not seriously object to this. The Incarnation, with its implications, is the very foundation of the edifice of Christian truth. Apart from it Christian revelation would be a mystery and almost a fraud. The coming of God in Christ to dwell with the children of men was in the fulness of the times. All investigations into the history of the times immediately preceding and following the birth of Jesus show how marvellously a place was made for Him and how He fitted into the place that had been made. Just as we find in the physical world that an organism is prepared by slow microcosmic stages for the performance of some higher function and entrance into some higher plane of being, so men had by the world of God been pre-

pared for the new and higher spiritual possibilities which were to be made actual in Jesus Christ. The Word became flesh when the world was capable of receiving the message which the Incarnation involved. In Christ man became created anew, for he then entered into the larger inheritance which had been prepared for him and which he was of an age to receive. That he did not enter upon it fully and at once was but of a piece with all God's action in the past.

II. Reconciling the World unto Himself." Then the world needed to be reconciled. It was estranged, alienated from God. It is so still, though the fact is not always acknowledged. And if it is so, why? Why the need for reconciliation? How did it come about, it is often objected, that God so mismanaged affairs that men did not know Him and serve Him instinctively and needed to be reconciled? These are some of the difficulties that the very use of the word "reconciliation" raises.

In the history of the race sin is independence of God. It has many forms, and manifests itself openly in a variety of ways. But in essence it is rebellion against God, impatience of His control, determination to be one's own master and to go one's own way. Sin may also be described as a disease—an unnatural and an unhealthy state that involves ceaseless and unavailing struggle. For this there can be no remedy save one which goes to the root of the mischief and seeks to restore man once again to true and natural relations with God. This conclusion is confirmed not only by the history of revelation, but by man's own efforts to retrieve his position for himself.

III. We May Say, in a Word, That the Supreme Purpose of pre-Christian Revelation Is to Vindicate the Majesty of God's Law and Prove Man To Be a Transgressor. But a

very little study of this revelation serves to bring out its great educational purpose. The law is ever a schoolmaster. It does not exist for its own sake, nor is it an end in itself. It is the outcome of God's love and pity for the weakness of man; it serves to vindicate His righteousness and to bring transgressors to a better mind. The new law in Jesus Christ was a means of grace such as the old could never be, because it lifted man at once on to a higher plane in his relation with God. And it was made necessary not only by the insufficiency of the old order, but by the blunders and impotence of man. While we believe profoundly that man was made in God's image and has in him the spark of the Divine, we cannot but believe also in what theologians call his depravity. There is almost a perverse ingenuity in the way in which man has fallen short of his opportunities and wilfully turned light into darkness. The history of revelation, while on one side it is the story of God's love and willingness to save, is on the other a dismal tale of man's hostility to God and peevish aversion from His will.—W. B. Selbie.

Atonement.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—2 Corinthians 5:21.

If we would bear in mind the definition of sin as the difference between what men are and what they were meant to be, we should readily perceive that the remission of sin involves nothing short of making men what they were meant to be. A humanity fulfilling the intention of God in its creation, and every individual filling the appointed place in such a restored humanity, that is the sublime

dream which is suggested by the destruction of sin in the light of the definition of sin which we have derived from the New Testament. That such a result could only be effected by the Omnipotence of God is evident; but in the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ the Apostles saw the demonstration that the Divine Power was set upon that result; they saw also, and inwardly experienced, the potency and the process by which the splendid purpose was to be achieved.

I. For the removal of sin men had to learn what they were meant to be. That is given to the world in the person of the Divine Man, Jesus Christ; and it is expounded to men in that body of teaching which is preserved for us in the Four Evangelists. "I am always amazed," said Tennyson, "when I read the New Testament, at the splendour of Christ's purity and holiness, and at his infinite pity."

II. But the thought of what we should be only awakens us to a sense of our helplessness in the coils of sin which are round us from our birth. It was therefore the work of Christ to become the head of a new humanity, a second Adam, as St. Paul would say, or, in the simpler language of St. John: "As many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the children of God, to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

III. But when Christ came there were sinners inheriting the curse of nature and far gone in the corruption of the will, who needed to be re-made if they were to be freed from sin. And, because the Church has so imperfectly understood the evangel of the New Humanity in Christ, by far the larger proportion of persons even in a Christian country go so far in sin that their deliverance is a ques-

tion of re-making. Jesus Christ announced the power which could thus re-make man in the simple but exalted language of John.

IV. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It was Jesus "lifted up" that was to be to sinful men what the serpent had been to the diseased Israelites. He who knew no sin was made sin on our behalf. Made sin! Yes, indeed, made sin in such a way that the law which condemned sin was fulfilled, and the sin it condemned was abolished.—R. F. Horton.

Christian Perfection.

"This we also pray for, even your perfecting."—2 Corinthians 13:9.

There is probably no subject Christian teachers touch so reluctantly as that of Christian Perfection. This is due partly to the difficulties of definition, and partly to the fact that it lays one open to misunderstanding. The Scriptures command perfection, promise perfection, and give examples of perfection. God does not mock us with impossible commands. There is an imperfect perfection. All perfection is relative except the perfection of God. Christian perfection does not indicate finality but fitness.

I. *The Meaning of Perfection.* To make perfect means to make fit, to put in order, adjust, adapt, arrange, and equip, so as to secure effectiveness and efficiency for the result to be achieved. The meaning is the same when applied to Christian life and experience. It is the adjustment, cleansing, and equipment of man's nature for all the purposes of the life in Christ. It is nothing more than making man fit in every part to do the will of God.

II. *All the Elements of Christian Character Are Set Forth in the Scriptures as Capable of Perfection.* The

elements that make up Christian character are Faith, Hope, Love; and each of these may be perfect.

1. Faith. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1 Thess. 3:10).

2. Hope. "Be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

3. Love. "Above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

III. *Christian Perfection Experienced in the Heart Is Manifest in the Life.* "By their fruits ye shall know them."

1. The firstfruit of the three-fold perfection of faith, hope and

love is patience. (1) The Christian made perfect in faith, hope and love will be perfect in his patience with God. (2) To many, patience with people is more difficult than patience with God. There is nothing can make us patient with trying people except faith in them, hope for them, and love of them.

2. Perfect obedience to the will of God.

3. A perfect tongue.

4. Perfect peace.

IV. *"If Thou Wouldest Be Perfect?"* For such a life who among the redeemed has not sighed and prayed? How then may we attain unto a life so glorious? It is the work and gift of God, and can only become ours by consecration, cleansing, and indwelling.—S. Chadwick.

GALATIANS

Justification by Faith.

"A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."—Galatians 2:16.

These words contain the pith and kernel of the Epistle. Occurring in historical narration, they strike the keynote of what is rather an exposition and appeal to previous convictions than an original, calm argument, such as is the treatment of the same subject in the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul says he convicted St. Peter of inconsistency in requiring Gentiles to Judaise, by reminding him that even they, Jews as they were, were not justified on account of works, but through faith in Christ. By an easy and natural transition this reminiscence is made the occasion for passing from the historical to the doctrinal part of the Epistle. That great truth which called forth the protest of apostle against apostle is the truth

from which the Galatians, like the Christians at Antioch, are being lured away. It is of the essence of Christianity to them as it was to their sister Church, and as it will be to the Church in all ages.

I. *Christianity Brings Justification.* —What is justification? Some have understood it as "making righteous," others as "accounting righteous." It is plain that St. Paul does teach that real righteousness is obtained through faith (e.g., Rom. 3:21). But it is equally plain that the natural rendering of such a passage as that now before us suggests the idea of treating or reckoning as righteous. The inference is that St. Paul used the expressions in both senses. And the inference from that is, not that he was confused in thought or consciously ambiguous, but that he saw a much closer connection between the two than Protestant theology, in revulsion from Romanism, has always made apparent. Justification is the immediate

result of forgiveness. God cannot think a man to be other than he is; but He can act towards him better than he deserves, can treat a sinner as only a righteous man deserves to be treated. This is justification. Now, forgiveness is personal and moral. It is not mere remission of penalties. It is reconciliation and restitution. The justification which is the consequence is not a mere external thing. It sows the seed of positive righteousness by infusing the highest motive for it. If it did not do this it would be immoral. Justification is itself justified by its fruits. This great boon is the first grace of Christianity. Until we are forgiven and thus justified we cannot begin to serve God.

II. Christianity Declares the Failure of Attempting to Secure Justification Through Works of Law.—All the world over men have been making frantic but futile efforts in this direction. A sickening sense of failure is the invariable result (Rom. 7:24). It is like the vanishing of a nightmare to see that the whole attempt is a mistake, that God recognises its impotence, and that He does not expect us to succeed in it. 1. We cannot be justified through works of Law, because if we do our best we are unprofitable servants, and have only done what we ought to have done. The slave whose whole time belongs to his master cannot earn anything by working overtime. Future obedience is simply obligatory on its own account; it cannot atone for past negligence. 2. We cannot renew our own nature by anything we do, seeing that we only work outwards from our nature. While the heart is corrupt the conduct cannot be justifying. 3. There is no life in Law to infuse power for holier service. Law restrains and represses; it cannot renew and inspire. Only love and grace can do that. 4. Nevertheless, obedience to the principles of the Law is not superseded by any other method of

justification. It is the justified through faith, and they only, who truly obey the Law, delighting to do the will of God.

III. Christianity Promises Justification Through Faith in Christ.—1. Faith is the means of justification, not the grounds of it. We are not justified on account of faith, but through Faith. Faith is not, taken as itself, a virtue serving just as works of Law were supposed to serve. The one ground of forgiveness and renewal is the grace of God in Christ. Faith is the means of securing this, because it unites us to Christ. 2. This faith is *in Christ, not in a creed*. We may cast our thoughts about Christ into a creed. Yet what is necessary is not the understanding of and assent to any doctrines, but trust in a Person. 3. The faith is *active trust*. It is not only believing about Christ, but relying on Him in conduct. For example, it is like, not only believing that a certain pillar-box belongs to the postoffice, but also dropping one's letter into it. 4. It is trust to Christ in *all His relations*, and therefore as much the confidence in Him as our Lord and Master that directly leads to obedience, as passive reliance on Him as a Saviour for the forgiveness and renewal which we can never work out for ourselves.—W. F. Adeney.

The Incarnation.

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."—Galatians 4:4.

Of all births this Bethlehem birth was the most unique. A superhuman life demands a superhuman birth. Let us gaze reverently into the abysmal depths of that manger-cradle in the Bethlehem-khan.

I. The first question that presents

itself to us is this: "*Was it necessary that God should more fully reveal himself to man?*" We reply in the affirmative. Men had quarrelled with God; and to a rebel sinner the dim light of Nature and Providence was wholly insufficient. Everywhere it was adamantine order, inflexible law, and iron sternness. "Nature's infinite order was the poor sinners' infinite despair."

II. Our next question is this: "*Could God favour the human race with a fuller revelation of himself?*" He could, because His power was as infinite as His love. "Would He do so?" His love and righteousness enable us to reply: "Yes, with all his heart." The infinite is never so great as when He stoops down to the lowliest and minutest.

III. And now, we are met by another question: "*How could the Infinite and Eternal best reveal himself to humanity?*" 1. Was physical nature the best medium, with its suns, and moons, and stars, and seas, and mountains? We take no jaundiced view of nature, but we think not; for the religion of nature puts great questions which it cannot answer; and the world keeps on crying with the dying German poet: "Mehr licht!" The moral cannot be fully revealed through the material. 2. Were books or written words the best of God's revealers? Words, whether spoken or written, constantly change in value and meaning. Carlyle in real life and Carlyle in his books were two very different men. A dogma has no heart. 3. Would an angel have better revealed God? Our reply is: "To angel 'Yes,' but to man 'No.'" "How then could the Infinite and Eternal best reveal Himself to the human race?" Our unhesitating reply is: "The Word must be made flesh." God must reveal Himself to man through a life human "at the red-ripe of the heart."—J. Ossian Davies.

The Fruit of the Spirit.

"*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*"—Galatians 5:16, 22, 23.

These words may well suggest to us thoughts for Whit-Sunday. We are reminded to-day of the spiritual life, and the Divine Author of it; we are reminded of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of the grace, virtue, and power which he gave to those who received Him. We are reminded to-day that it is the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church and in the heart of each believer that makes the Christian life. The Christian life is something for more than morality: it is the planting of the Divine life—man, it is the infusion of another and spiritual nature; and St. Paul tells us here how that spiritual nature is shown and proved. He brings us to this simple test, which I wish briefly to emphasise.

I. *That It Is Known by Its Fruits.* It is never an easy thing to define spirituality or to say who is the spiritual man. You cannot tell how God joins Himself to the human soul and produces in what is naturally selfish, proud, pleasure-loving, greedy and covetous the graces and feelings which are the very opposite of all these. It is of no use discussing the philosophy of it; it passeth understanding. The Apostle simply fastens us down to this: that it is known by its results. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness," and the rest. We are not on doubtful ground there. The spiritual man is one in whom the lusts of the flesh are held down by a higher power, who no longer loves with all the burning pas-

sion of his nature the things that can be seen, touched and tasted, the things of the senses and appetite, the glitter, show and gains of the material world, but who loves best and desires most what Christ loved—goodness, purity, soul-beauty and likeness to God. The spiritual man has the mind of Christ.

II. Where These Fruits Are the Spirit of God Is. We sometimes say, with our short-sighted and foolish limitations, that the Spirit of God never works except in those who have believed exactly in our way. We say, "They must have been convicted and regenerated, and brought into the acceptance of certain articles of belief, before they can have any part in the spiritual helps which God gives." But we only show our ignorant presumption when we talk in that way. God refuses to be bound down by our little plans and schemes. The heart of the Eternal is larger than all the creeds. And though He only gives His spirit in all its fulness and power to those who cling to Christ in earnest faith, He does not withhold it altogether from others. Where you find in men and women something

that is far higher than the sensual and animal; where there is courage and self-forgetfulness, and patience in sorrow, and compassion and tenderness towards others, and pure thoughts and striving after nobler things, there you may be sure that God has not left Himself without witness. These are the gifts of His good Spirit; they cannot come from any other. No more can all these graces grow where God is not than grapes can grow on thorn-bushes and figs on thistles. The fruits of the Spirit are these, and only the Spirit can produce them—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness and goodness.

—III. It Is Only Where These Fruits of the Spirit Are That There Is Any Real Understanding of Divine Things. St. Paul is always claiming for the Spiritual man superior discernments, claiming for him the power of judging all things, claiming for him joys which are unknown to others. But this power is not a thing of the intellect: it is a preconception of the heart. It is where love, longsuffering and gentleness are found that the things of God are understood.—J. G. Greenhough.

EPHESIANS

Regeneration and Sonship in Christ.

"Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."—Ephesians 1:5.

I. Christ Is the Unique Son of God.—From what we know of our Lord as He lived among men, nothing so perfectly represents the impression which His character, spirit, and history produce upon us as the title which describes Him as the Son of God. Other men had been God's servants; He, too, was "born under

the law"; but to speak of Him as a servant does not tell half the truth. He is a servant, and something more. There is an ease, a freedom, a grace about His doing of the will of God, which can belong only to a Son. About the Father's love for Him He has never any doubt; and there is no sign that His perfect faith is the result of discipline, or that it had ever been less secure and tranquil than it was in the maturity of His strength. When He speaks of the glory which is to come to Him after His death and resurrection, He is still a Son anticipating the honour to which the

Father has always destined Him, and which indeed had always been His.

II. *Christians Are the Adopted Sons of God.*—If we are “in Christ” we, according to God’s eternal purpose, have become God’s sons. The eternal relationship between Christ and the Father cannot belong to us; but all who are one with Christ share the blessedness, the security, and the honour of that relationship; and the life of Christ, which has its eternal fountains in the life of God, is theirs.

III. *Christians Are Made Sons of God by a New and Supernatural Birth.*—Regeneration is sometimes described as though it were merely a change in a man’s principles of conduct, character, taste, habits. If so, we should have to speak of a man as being more or less regenerate according to the extent of his moral reformation, which would be contrary to the idiom of New Testament thought. The simplest and most obvious account of regeneration is the truest. When a man is regenerated he receives a new life, and receives it from God. A higher nature comes to him than that which he inherited from his human parents; he is “begotten of God,” “born of the Spirit.”

IV. *The Incarnation of Christ Effects Our Adoption and Regeneration.*—The capacity for receiving the Divine life is native to us, but the actual realisation of our sonship is possible only through Christ. Not until the Son of God became Man could men, either in this world or in worlds unseen, become the sons of God. The Incarnation raised human nature to a loftier level, lifted it nearer to God, fulfilled in a new and nobler manner the Divine idea of humanity.

V. *These Blessings Are To Be Ascribed Solely to God’s Infinite Love.*—We had no claim upon Him for gifts like these. Nor, in conferring them, did He act under the constraint of any law of His own nature which imposed upon Him either a necessity

or an obligation to raise us to the dignity of Divine sonship. It is all the result of His free, enforced, spontaneous kindness. What He has done for us is “to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved.”—R. W. Dale.

The Forgiveness of Sins.

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”—Ephesians 1:7.

The earlier verses of this chapter contain Paul’s conception of the Divine ideal of human nature. It was the Divine purpose “before the foundation of the world” that men should share the life and sonship of the eternal Son of God. It was for this that human nature received its wonderful capacities. Its sanctity and righteousness were to be secured by union with Christ. The human race was to be a great spiritual organism, having Christ for the root of its life and blessedness. Abiding in Christ, the race was to abide in God; and only by abiding in Christ could the race achieve the perfection and glory for which it was created. But the Divine purpose did not suppress human freedom. It could be fulfilled only by the free concurrence of the race with the Divine righteousness and love; and the whole order of the development of the Divine thought has been disturbed by sin. In His infinite goodness God has delivered us from the immense catastrophe which came upon us through our revolt against His authority. In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness.

I. What Forgiveness Is Not.

1. Forgiveness is not a change in our minds towards God, but a change in God’s mind towards us. Take an illustration. A son has been guilty

of flagrant misconduct towards his father; has insulted him, slandered his character, robbed him, and almost ruined him. The son discovers his guilt and is greatly distressed. He does all he can to atone for his wickedness. He has become a better man, and there is a great change in his mind and conduct towards his father. But it is possible for all the change to be on one side. He may be unable to remove or even to lessen his father's indignation against him. His father may continue for years bitter, relentless, unforgiving. I do not mean to suggest that God will be hard with us when we repent; but if we are to have any clear and true thoughts about this subject we must see distinctly that it is one thing for us to repent of sin and to become better, and quite another thing for God to forgive us.

2. Nor must the Divine forgiveness be confounded with peace of conscience. I have known many people who were restless and unhappy, dissatisfied with themselves, and unable to find any rest of heart in the Divine mercy. The reason was plain: they were not troubled by the Divine hostility to their sin, and therefore the assurance that God was willing to forgive them afforded them no relief. It was not God's thoughts about them that occasioned their distress, but their own thoughts about themselves. They did not want to obtain the Divine forgiveness, but to recover their own self-respect, which had been wounded by the discovery of their moral imperfections. But it is clearly one thing for God to be at peace with us, and quite a different thing for us to be at peace with ourselves.

3. We must not suppose that as soon as God forgives us we escape at once from the painful and just consequences of our sins. The sins may be forgiven, and yet many of the penalties which they have brought upon us may remain. There is a certain

alliance between the laws of nature and the laws of righteousness, and there is a similar alliance between the natural laws of society and the laws of righteousness. No Divine act arrests the operation of the natural laws which punish the penitent for his former drunkenness. There are vices, such as flagrant lying, gross treachery, deliberate dishonesty, which involve a man in heavy social penalties. He does not escape these penalties when he repents of the vices and receives the Divine pardon. He is maimed for life. His chances are lost. He will recover with difficulty the confidence of even kindly and generous men. Positions of public trust and honour will be closed against him. He will be excluded from many kinds of usefulness.

II. What It Is for God to Forgive Sins.

1. Forgiveness among ourselves implies that there has been just resentment against the person whom we forgive, resentment provoked by his wrongdoing. When we forgive him the resentment ceases. And so also does God regard, not with disapproval only, but with resentment, those who sin; and when He forgives men, His resentment ceases.

2. When God forgives, He actually remits our sin. Our responsibility for it ceases. The guilt of it is no longer ours. When His resentment against us ceases, the eternal law of righteousness ceases to be hostile to us. When He pardons our transgressions, the eternal law of righteousness no longer holds us responsible for them. The shadow which they had projected across our life, and which lengthened with our lengthening years, passes away. We look back upon the sins which God has forgiven and we condemn them still, but the condemnation does not fall upon ourselves; for God, who is the living law of righteousness, condemns us no longer.

3. The peace and blessedness of this release from guilt are wonderful. The soul is conscious of a Divine freedom. It can approach God with happy trust and with perfect courage, for the past is no longer a source of terror, and the future is bright with immortal hope.—R. W. Dale.

Redemption by the Blood of Jesus.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood."—Ephesians 1:7.

I. The Certainty with Which Christ Has, in Point of Fact, Redeemed His People. 1. Show how we came to need redemption. 2. Christ Jesus, as Mediator, at a certain period of this world's history, gave Himself a ransom for His people.

II. I Come Now to Mention Some of the Properties of That Redemption with Which Christ Redeems His People. 1. It is free or unmerited on the part of man. 2. A full redemption. 3. This redemption takes effect in time. 4. This redemption is for eternity. 5. Redemption by Jesus implies that we could not redeem ourselves. It is a law in nature that like produces like; and if it be once settled that our progenitors were corrupted and depraved, and at the same time granted that we are descended from them, the contrary of which is self-contradictory; then as sure as the corrupted fountain sends forth a polluted stream, so sure are we backward to that which is good, and forward to that which is evil. And sooner may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots—which would be nature inverting nature's course, for it is natural for them to be as they are—than can man who is born of a woman cease to do evil, and learn to do well. I shall now conclude this discourse with a few remarks, by way of improvement. 1. From this subject learn the high

privilege of the children of men to be redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 John 3:1). Redemption is doubly endeared to man by the love of God, and by the sufferings of Jesus. 2. From this subject learn the duty of Christian diligence (2 Pet. 3:14). 3. Learn from what has been said, that the end of refusing this redemption is eternal death (Isa. 30:33). 4. From this subject learn the blessedness of the redeemed (1 Cor. 2:19).—R. Montgomery.

The Riches of God's Grace.

"According to the riches of his grace."—Ephesians 1:7.

I. The Riches of God's Grace Are Illustrated by the Nature and Cause of Those Evils from Which God Is Willing to Redeem Us.—It is not misfortune we are suffering from, but guilt; the anger of God has not come upon us by accident; hell is not a mere calamity, the pains of eternal death are not undeserved. All the evils of our condition, from which God is eager to save us, are the result of our own fault. We have sinned; and the sin is regarded by God with deep and intense abhorrence. If a man whom you have trusted lies to you again and again, you fling him off from you with contempt. If you have detected a man whom you have trusted in an attempt to commit deliberative fraud upon you, you close your doors against him and forbid him ever to enter your house. If he be drunken, profane, and profligate, you think of him with disgust. And whatever abhorrence and loathing we may feel for gross sin, God, who is infinitely purer than we are, feels for all sin, and it is sin which has brought all our woes upon us. We have sinned, not ignorantly, but knowingly. We have sinned for years, and perhaps some of us are only now begin-

ning to think of amendment. And yet to us sinners, to the guiltiest and most flagrant sinner among us, God offers redemption, and shows "the riches of his grace."

II. The Riches of His Grace Are Illustrated in What He Has Done to Effect Our Redemption.—"Through the blood of Christ." The Son of God, the Creator of our race, the moral Ruler of the universe, with whom it rested, when we had sinned, fully to express the Divine sense of the magnitude of our guilt, and to inflict the penalties which we deserved; laid His glory by, in order that He might endure the penalty instead of inflicting it, that He might express His sense of our sin by enduring death before He forgave it, instead of inflicting death on us because we had transgressed.

III. The Conditions on Which God Offers Salvation Illustrates the Riches of His Grace. A free gift—the only condition being that we be willing to receive it. "Arise, and be free!" is Christ's message to all.

IV. The Very Name by Which the Christian Revelation Is Known Illustrates This. It is not called a system or a doctrine, else it might be necessary to master the doctrine before you could secure redemption. It is not a moral but a spiritual discipline, else it might be necessary that you should subject yourself to its vivifying and invigorating power before redemption could be yours. It is not a law, else you would have to obey it before its promises could be fulfilled. It is not a promise of redemption, nor an assurance that God is willing to accomplish your redemption, else there might be conditions attached to the promise by which you might be perplexed and hindered. No; but it is a gospel—good news from heaven to earth, from God to man; good news of the Divine love which anger against sin has not quenched; good news of a great re-

demption wrought out in us; good news that God through Christ is nigh at hand and eager to forgive sins; good news that everything that is necessary to complete our salvation God has actually conferred upon us through Christ Jesus our Lord, and that we have only to receive it in order to rejoice in eternal blessedness.

V. The Concern God Has Shown About Our Salvation Illustrates the Riches of His Grace. We sometimes speak of those who are seeking God. The New Testament speaks of God seeking us. The Good Shepherd goes out into the wilderness after the sheep that has gone astray, before there is any terror felt at its danger, or any desire on its part to return. This is God's conduct towards us. Is it not so? Why is it that any of you are at this moment restless because of your guilt, alarmed because of your danger, and longing to find your way into the peace of God? Is it the result of strenuous and laborious effort of your own to discover whether or not you had incurred guilt and exposure to danger? Has it not all come to you, you know not how? And yet, when you begin to consider, you conclude that it has been awakened in your heart by God. Can you be so ungrateful for His persistent love?—R. W. Dale.

The Purpose of Redemption.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." —Ephesians 3:10-11.

I. Let Us Consider Who Are Meant by the Church.—Paul sometimes uses this appellation to denote a single society of Christians; but he more commonly uses the term to

denote the whole number of the elect, or all who shall finally be sanctified and saved. This portion of mankind he considers as composing the Church universal, which is a spiritual body, of which Christ is the spiritual Head. In this comprehensive sense the apostle uses the term Church in the text. He means to signify by it the whole Church of the first-born in heaven, or all who shall be set up as monuments to display the riches of Divine grace to the whole intelligent creation.

II. When the Deity Formed His Purpose of Redeeming the Church from Among Men.—The text tells us it was in eternity: "According to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." All the elect are said to have been "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And St. John tells us, he "saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." These are plain declarations that the Gospel scheme of salvation was formed in eternity; which perfectly accords with every just idea of the Divine character. God was self-existent, independent, and absolutely perfect from eternity. He was infinitely able to form His whole plan of operation before He began to operate; and no good reason could possibly exist for His neglecting, a single moment, to fix all future events.

III. Why God Was Graciously Pleased to Devise and Adopt, from Eternity, the Great Scheme of Man's Redemption.—To this inquiry the apostle gives a general answer in the text. He says, it was "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." Moved by infinite benevolence, the Deity determined to make Himself known through the medium of His works; and, among

all possible works, He saw the work of redemption to be the best adapted to answer this glorious and important purpose. He knew that His creatures could not see the natural and moral excellency of His nature, unless He actually displayed Himself in His works. 1. God chose the work of redemption, because it was the only one in which He could display all His perfections before the minds of His intelligent creatures. 2. Another reason why God devised and adopted the work of redemption was because there was no other way by which He could so clearly and fully manifest any of His perfections. We have just observed that there was no other way by which He could discover all His perfections; but we now further observe, that there was no other by which He could display any of his perfections, in their highest beauty and glory. 3. There was another important reason why God determined to make Himself known by the work of redemption. He saw it was necessary, not only to display all His perfections, and to display them all in the clearest manner, but also to prepare the minds of all moral beings to view them with the greatest attention and sensibility. He meant not only to give them an opportunity to see Himself, but to awaken their attention, and fix it upon His great and amiable character. And nothing could be better adapted to this end than to place them in a situation which would render all the displays of His glory highly interesting to themselves.—N. Emmons.

Grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

"*And grieve not the holy spirit of God.*"—Ephesians 4: 30.

I. What It Is To Grieve the Holy Spirit of God.—We are startled at the expression. Few of us would

have thought of using it if we had not found it in the Bible. It cannot be a mere figure of speech. It must describe a strange, sad, touching fact. 1. God is a *living Spirit*. He can be grieved. 2. God is our *Father*, related to us, loving us. It is of the self-sacrificing nature of love that it lays itself out to be wounded when it is treated unworthily. We can always hurt most those who love us most. 3. God is *within us*. The Holy Spirit is God dwelling in our spirits. Because He is so near He is much concerned with our character and conduct.

II. How We May Grieve the Holy Spirit of God.—1. All sin is grievous to Him, as holiness is hurt by unholiness and love by unworthiness. This should be one warning against our carelessness in falling into temptation. If we do not feel it, God does. A child who would not refrain from a bad thing on its own account, checks himself as he thinks how it would vex his mother. We should be warned by remembering that our sin hurts God—did it not kill Christ? 2. St. Paul has in mind the particular sin of *corrupt speech* (ver. 29). This defiles the soul and dishonours the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. Flippant conversation on sacred subjects, as well as language that is absolutely debased, is grievous in the ears of God, not only on its own account, but because it reveals a low tone of spiritual life and a want of the reverence and love that we owe to the Holy Spirit.

III. Why We Should Be Most Careful Not To Grieve the Holy Spirit of God.—1. Because of the obligations of gratitude for *past grace*. If we are spiritual Christians we are “sealed”; i.e., we have the mark of God’s recognition and owning given by the Spirit. After accepting the uniform of the Divine King, how can we heedlessly bring dishonour on His Name? 2. Because of the responsi-

bilities of our *present condition*. We are sealed “in the Spirit.” To be in living relation with the Spirit of God is the condition of all who are new creatures in Christ. This higher fellowship brings higher claims. 3. Because of the hope of our *future redemption*. Christians are sealed “unto the day of redemption.” The first day of redemption is the day of Christ’s death, but that marks only the beginning of deliverance. To each soul the day of God’s forgiveness and welcome of the penitent is a day of redemption; but perfect redemption is deliverance from all evil. This is at present a hope, and the hope depends on the work of the Spirit of God. If we are grieving the Spirit of God how can we ask for His aid? There is danger lest one grieve the Holy Spirit so that He take His departure, and then how dark and woe-will the deserted soul be!—W. F. Adeney.

Christ’s Sacrifice.

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”
—Ephesians 5:2.

I. The Design of the Saviour’s Interposition.—“He gave Himself a sacrifice for us.” He had given us many things before. He had given us the sun to cheer us, the air to brace us, the rain to refresh us, and made the earth to bring forth and to bud; and at last He gave us Himself. He gave Himself for us long before His incarnation; and “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

II. The Acceptableness of the Sacrifice.—“An offering and sacrifice to

God, for a sweetsmelling savour." Go back to the time of the flood. Here we are informed that "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord," and offered sacrifices; "and the Lord smelled a sweet savour: and the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." So God delighted in the sacrifice of His Son, and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You may be reconciled to a servant, and you may admit him to a place in your house; still it may not be easy to admit him to a place in your affections. But we never can be so dear to God as when clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sprinkled with His precious blood.

III. The Principles That Actuated Him.—"He loved us, and gave himself for us." That which cannot be known perfectly may be known pre-eminently. 1. His love is magnified in His gift. 2. It is magnified in the greatness of His sufferings. 3. It is magnified because He was acquainted with every part of His sufferings before He engaged to suffer. 4. It magnifies His love because we were unworthy of its exercise. 5. It magnifies His love because He did not wait to be asked. He did this not only without our desert, but without our desire. 6. It magnifies His love by the number of blessings to be derived from it.

IV. We Have Now to Draw Some Inferences from This Subject.—1. What is enjoined? "Walk in love." Strive to excel in it. We read of men walking in pride. He is lofty; he swaggers as he walks; he answers those beneath him roughly. Pride is his region; it is the air in which he breathes. So is it with love: you are not only to walk in love, but to live in it. 2. For whom is this enjoined? It is to be exercised towards Himself. 3. To whom is this enjoined? "Walk in love." It was to the Ephesians. But are you blame-

less here? 4. How is it enjoined? "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (1) As the model of our love. Thus our love must resemble His. And are you to exercise no self-denial? His love was a constant love; is yours to be changeable and varying? (2) But the apostle means that we should make the love of Christ the motive as well as the model of ours. "We love him, because he first loved us." By this motive be led to present your bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."—W. Jay.

Plenitude of the Spirit.

"Be filled with the Spirit."—Ephesians 5:18.

What is meant by the Plenitude of the Spirit?

I. The Phrase Occurs in a Command or Exhortation; the apostle makes use of the imperative mood. We are bidden to do, or to be—a demand is made upon us. Yet the verb is passive in form, and it is natural to object that the process described is God's work, not ours. That august Breath of God blows when and where He lists; we can neither originate nor control Divine influence. The "baptism of the Spirit," the "outpouring of the Spirit," the "descent of the Spirit," do not denote action on our part, but the reception of an essentially Divine gift. When we read of the Primitive Church that they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost," or that Stephen or Barnabas was "full of the Holy Ghost," the impression conveyed is one of supernatural power resting on these men. Self-inspiration is absurd. To issue a command that men should acquire what God can confer might seem to imply either a blunder or a blasphemy.

II. The Injunction "Be Filled"

Means That We May, We Can, and Therefore We Ought To Play Our Part. "Ye must be born again" implies that we can be so born, and then a glorious possibility of privilege becomes a sacred duty. The relation between the Divine and the human is not that of an alien supernatural power energising passive clay into fresh life. That is a heathenish notion of inspiration which would regard the Holy Spirit as a magical, external power which must be invoked in the fashion of the prophets of Baal, who cut themselves with knives to procure the boon of supernatural fire from heaven. The Spirit is here, waiting—oh, how He waits! He is unspeakably near to every heart of man—longing, wooing, drawing, striving, filling each soul as far as He can whenever there is room to receive Him, quickening when the faintest movement of response makes it possible for Him to infuse new life; or as a favouring wind to fill the sails of the soul still further, and carry the frail vessel on its forward, homeward way.

But that is not precisely the thought of the text. It is addressed not to mankind at large, but to the Church. It refers not to the vague indefinable Divine Spirit of the Pantheist or the Mystic, but to the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit who is known, loved, understood and obeyed; the Spirit who originated the new life in the heart of every member, and made each man who is in Christ a new creation; the Spirit who operates in us every moment, though in scanty measure because of our meagre faith and lukewarm love; the Spirit who at every moment—at this moment—waits, longing to raise, inspire, purify and empower us as He has never done before.

We are directed to find our fulness in Him, and in Him alone. That does not mean the cessation of effort till a Higher Power shall quicken us.

Nor does it mean a feverish and anxious occupation in good works and religious ordinances, as if we could kindle loftier affection by sedulous attention to detailed duties. It means that we are to go back to the Fountain-head at once, and always with a directness and immediacy that takes no denial; that every Church and every member is to be in his own place an organ of a Higher Will, intelligently and earnestly co-operating with a Power which informs and sustains and animates the whole. The work that was done at first was not done by us, but by a Higher Power in us and through us; decline begins when men forget this and concentrate attention upon their own efforts. Renewal implies a requickening from the primal source—the love of God in Christ poured abroad in the heart of the Holy Spirit given unto us.

III. The Heart That Would Be Spirit-filled Must First Be Empty.—Empty, that is, of everything that would prevent the Spirit from doing His characteristic work. For there is no necessary antagonism between the operation of the Spirit of God and a thousand varied aims for which the Church legitimately strives, a thousand interests in the world which she seeks to promote. Distinguish between a true and a false spirituality. Not by withdrawing the leaven from the mass of meal can the lump be leavened, but by the potency of a ferment mighty enough to quicken the whole. Still it is clear that the Holy Spirit of God cannot fill as He would an already full vessel, and there simply is not room enough for the Spirit to work in some churches that are calling loudly for His presence, in many hearts that are praying earnestly for His indwelling. Apart from subtle forms of sin, with which we are not now concerned, the pathways of the soul may be blocked, the Divine channel may be obstructed, the

soil of the heart choked with a tangle of thorns and weeds, and thus not the entrance, but the plenary work of the Spirit be effectually hindered.—W. T. Davison.

Intercession.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."
—Ephesians 6:18.

Intercession is the characteristic of Christian worship, the privilege of the heavenly adoption, the exercise of the perfect and spiritual mind.

I. *First Let Us Turn to the Express Injunctions of Scripture.* For instance, the text itself, "Praying in every season with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and abstaining from sleep for the purpose, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Observe the earnestness of the intercession here inculcated; "in every season," "with all supplication," and "to the loss of sleep." Again, in the Epistle to the Colossians; "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving, withal praying for us also." Again, "Brethren, pray for us." And again in detail; "I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority. I will therefore that men pray in every place." On the other hand, go through the Epistles, and reckon up how many exhortations occur therein to pray merely for self. You will find there are few, or rather none at all. Even those which seem at first sight to be such, will be found really to have in view the good of the Church.

II. *Such Is the Lesson Taught Us by the Words and Deeds of the Apostles and Their Brethren.* Nor could

it be otherwise, if Christianity be a social religion, as it is pre-eminently. If Christians are to live together, they will pray together; and united prayer is necessarily of an intercessory character, as being offered for each other and for the whole, and for self as one of the whole. In proportion, then as unity is an especial Gospel-duty, so does Gospel-prayer partake of a social character; and intercession becomes a token of the existence of a Church Catholic.

III. *Intercession Is the Especial Observance of the Christian,* because he alone is in a condition to offer it. It is the function of the justified and obedient, of the sons of God, "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"; not of the carnal and unregenerate. This is plain even to natural reason. The blind man, who was cured, said of Christ, "We know that God heareth not sinners; but, if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth." Saul the persecutor obviously could not intercede like St. Paul the apostle. Our first prayers ever must be for ourselves. Our own salvation is our personal concern; till we labour to secure it, till we try to live religiously, and pray to be enabled to do so, nay, and have made progress, it is but hypocrisy, or at best it is overbold, to busy ourselves with others. I do not mean that prayer for self always comes first in order of time, and intercession second. Blessed be God, we were all made His children before we had actually sinned; we began life in purity and innocence. Intercession is never more appropriate than when sin had been utterly abolished, and the heart was most affectionate and least selfish. Nor would I deny, that a care for the souls of other men may be the first symptom of a man's beginning to think about his own; or that persons, who are conscious to themselves of much guilt,

often pray for those whom they revere and love, when under the influence of fear, or in agony, or other strong emotion, and, perhaps, at other times. Still it is true, that there is something incongruous and inconsistent in a man's presuming to intercede, who is an habitual and deliberate sinner. Also it is true, that most men do, more or less, fall away from God, sully their baptismal robe, need the grace of repentance, and have to be awakened to the necessity of

prayer for self, as the first step in observing prayer of any kind.

The privilege of intercession is a trust committed to all Christians who have a clear conscience and are in full communion with the Church. We leave secret things to God—what each man's real advancement is in holy things, and what his real power in the unseen world. Two things alone concern us, to exercise our gift and make ourselves more and more worthy of it.—J. H. Newman.

PHILIPPIANS

The Power of Christ's Resurrection.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."—Philippians 3:10.

What is the sense of this word "power"? There is no room for mistake as to its general import. By the power of a fact we mean the bearing, the consequences, as distinct from the existence of the fact; we mean the inferences which may be drawn from it, or the influence which it will naturally exert.

I. *The Power of the Resurrection Is To Be Seen First of All in a Christian's Thought.* It is the fundamental fact which satisfies him of the absolute truth of the religion of Christ.

Now here, first, it is abundantly clear that the Apostles felt certain of their facts. They did not merely whisper in assemblies of the faithful that Jesus was risen, as a private topic of comfort for Christian souls; they carried their bold assertion of the Resurrection before tribunals, which were filled by their keen, bitter, and contemptuous enemies, and challenged them to gainsay it if they could. If, after the fashion of modern times, the ruling Sadducees had

appointed a scientific commission to investigate the matter, nobody would have been better pleased than the Apostles. They had nothing to lose, they had everything to gain, by a thorough searching inquiry. "We have not followed," one of them wrote in after years, "cunningly devised fables," "we cannot," they said a few weeks after the event—"we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They trusted their senses sufficiently to believe One who revealed to them a world higher and greater than the world of sense; and in doing this, certainly, they could say with the Psalmist, that He had "set their feet upon the rock, and ordered their goings, and had put a new song in their mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God." For them the Resurrection warranted the truth of Christ's mission, the truth of Christianity. All that Christ had said, all that He had promised and foretold, was raised by it to the high level of undisputed certainty. With the mighty power of such a miracle, so certified, impelling and sustaining them, they went forward, they could not but go forward, to win the attention, the acquiescence, the faith of men in the truths which it attested. What became of them personally it

mattered not. If they succeeded, it would be in the strength of the risen Jesus. If they failed, the mighty risen One would yet succeed. There it was, ever before them, the imperious, the invigorating fact that He had broken forth from His grave as He said He would; and it only remained for them, as it remains for us at this hour, to do justice to the evidential power of His resurrection. St. Paul maintains the Resurrection of Christ to be so bound up with Christianity, that to deny it is not simply to cut its most important incident out of the heart of the Christian creed, but that it is to part with Christianity as a whole. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins; then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Deny the Resurrection, and Christianity collapses altogether, as certainly as does an arch when its keystone is removed; and in place of the Conqueror of death and the Redeemer of souls, there remains only a Jewish rabbi, whose story has been curiously encrusted with legend, and some of whose sayings are still undoubtedly entitled to attention. But conversely, admit the Resurrection, and you must confess the Creed. In admitting the truth of the Resurrection, you make an admission which, if you are a thinking man, must govern, colour, impregnate your whole thought, must make faith intellectually easy, and doubt unwelcome. For the Resurrection guarantees the absolute truth of Christ's teaching and mission; it converts His death into the transient preliminary of an eternal triumph; it leads on to the Ascension and the Perpetual Intercession in heaven; it is the warrant that He will come to judgment.

II. But It Is in the Conduct of the Christian, in His Moral and Spiritual Life, That the Power of the Resurrec-

tion May Chiefly Be Felt. This was the main scope of the Apostle's prayer. He had no doubt about the truth of the Gospel. But to know the risen Christ in his own heart and will—this was a field wherein boundless improvement, moreover, in which, on this side the grave, perfect satisfaction was unattainable. What, then, are the necessary conditions of an effective moral power, of a power which shall stimulate and control feeling, resolution, action? There are, I apprehend, two main conditions which must be satisfied by any such power; and which are satisfied, and that amply, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. In the first place, it opens out before the eye of the soul its one adequate aim in all action and in all endurance; that is to say, a union of the whole man with God, extending through the vast perspectives of a boundless eternity.

2. But the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ also satisfies the second condition of an effective moral power; it assures to us the continuous presence of help from on high. To have revealed a future life to us in our unaided weakness would have been to abandon us to despair; but, as it is, the revelation of our eternal home is also the assurance of our being enabled, if we are willing, to secure it.—H. P. Liddon.

Heaven.

"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."—Philippians 3:20.

What is heaven? That is a question to which the Church can give a partial, though as yet necessarily an incomplete, answer. It is manifest that the Church must depend upon the revelation of her Divine Founder

Himself. For heaven lies beyond the range of human intuitions or discoveries. "No man hath seen God at any time"; and no man hath seen heaven.

I. *We Turn, Then, to the Words of Jesus Christ.* And here it is important to remark that, when He spoke of heaven, He was careful to use such language as is figurative or analogical. It is impossible in human words to give an exact account of a supernatural existence. Yet human words must be employed, and such as will convey the best idea which the audience is capable of apprehending. The words of our Lord relating to heaven need to be accepted under the limiting condition that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" the things of heaven; and that revelation of them is not literal, but spiritual. But while it is true that our Lord's words respecting heaven must be regarded as adumbrations of an inexpressible and inconceivable reality, it is not impossible to draw certain inferences from His teaching and from His life.

1. Thus He taught, beyond doubt, the existence of heaven. He did not prove it; He took it for granted. To Him, as to all who have learnt the secret of the Gospel, the life of earth is the shadow, the life of heaven is the substance; the one is transient, the other is real, enduring, absolute, true.

2. Jesus Christ then taught the reality of heaven; and, in His teaching, He spoke of it with complete knowledge, with complete certainty. He professed and claimed to know all about heaven. As being the Son of God, as having descended to earth from God, He could, if He would, afford to mankind a full revelation of the celestial city, wherein His Father dwelt. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." This is the substance of His revelation.

3. Whether it was His will or not to reveal the character of heaven, He declared explicitly that it was within His power to reveal it. "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." It is remarkable, then, that our Lord should have observed in all His teaching so great a reticence in speaking of heaven. Heaven was clearly one of those subjects upon which it was impossible for Him to tell, as a man to men, all He knew.

4. There is, however, a manifest intention not to exaggerate the awfulness of the invisible world. It may be said of Jesus Christ that, while He laid a powerful emphasis on the reality and significance of that world, He intended it to be a hope, a solace, a motive to holiness, and not to exercise a paralysing influence upon human action, as was the case in the year A. D. 1000, when the anticipation of the world's end as imminent impoverished and impaired human action. The will of God is that we should prepare ourselves in this life for the next, not that we should sacrifice this life and its endeavours as though they were practically worthless.

II. *Among the Lessons of Christ's Teaching upon Heaven There Are Two Which Seem To Stand Out in Relief.*—He taught that the enjoyment of the heavenly life depended upon character and conduct in this life; and also that the access to the heavenly life lay in the method and revelation of His hid Gospel. It is not in man to merit heaven.

III. *Heaven Is Not a Place, or a Period, but a State.* Is it possible to understand that existence? The soul of man is the seal of personality or identity; and it is the soul which is immortal and enters heaven. But, if we know what it is that is immortal, we may hope to know what it is that

the immortal being is capable of being or doing. The intellectual, moral and spiritual faculties of man continue eternally. No merely negative conception of heaven can be just. To regard it simply as a state of immunity from sin and sorrow and suffering is to mistake its character altogether. The death of saints is an emancipation from limiting conditions. It is a progress and exaltation. It is the entrance into a sublime existence, into the perfect state and perfect exercise of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties—in a word, into heaven.

IV. It Is Asked by Many an Anxious, Yearning Heart if They Who Have Known and Loved on Earth Will Regain Such Mutual Knowledge in Eternity? Can it be doubted that this knowledge will be theirs? Continuity, it has been said, is by death broken; identity remains; personality survives the grave. And if it be so, then it may be permitted to hope—nay, indeed, to believe intensely—that in heaven we shall enjoy the society of those who have been nearest and dearest upon earth. We shall know them, and they us. We shall live with them in full and free communion; their adoration; the saddest of all earthly fears, the fear of separation, will be wanting. There will be no more parting for ever.—Bishop Welldon.

Redemption of the Body.

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."—Philippians 3: 21.

I. The Subject of the Process. In our present fallen state the bodies, even of the saints, exhibit marks of degradation, and furnish the causes by which that degradation is manifested. 1. Our bodies, as they were created, so are they now supported,

by nutriment derived from the earth on which we tread. 2. They are liable to be painfully affected by various elements and agencies of physical nature. 3. They are subject to manifold injuries, and sufferings, and diseases. 4. They are ultimately destined to return to the dust from whence they were taken. 5. On these accounts, and with a tacit comparison of what the body is with what it was, with what it should have been, if sin had not marred it—and with what it shall be—that the apostle terms it the body of our humiliation, but too sadly in keeping with the fallen and degraded soul, till renewed by the grace of the Almighty Spirit.

II. The Process. 1. Not an absolute change, but a transformation and modification. This presupposes and implies the doctrine of the resurrection. 2. The model, according to which this change is accomplished, is nothing less than the glorified humanity of Christ.

III. The Agency. Surely He who made that which was not can make that which has been to be again. And, therefore, the text refers us to the Omnipotence of God. So wondrous a change is only explicable on the hypothesis of miracle.

IV. The Lessons. The doctrine is—1. Highly illustrative of the glory of the Divine attributes. (1) How glorious will be that wisdom, which, through all the mutations of time shall keep its eye upon those integral and ultimate parts of the human body, which are essential to its identity, through all their various transitions, and which will collect those scattered particles and recombine them into a beauteous frame. (2) How glorious that justice which will sooner or later render to every man in his body according to what he hath done. (3) How glorious that mercy which first makes men saints and constitutes them citizens of heaven, and finally admits them to the city of which they

are made free by grace. 2. Calls upon us to remember and recognise with devout gratitude our special obligation to the Christian revelation, which brings this "life" and this "immortality," not only of the spirit but of the body, "to light." 3. Furnishes a powerful motive to submission when we are called upon to suffer bodily infirmity. 4. Affords an antidote against the tormenting fear of death for ourselves in ordinary life, and in the common process of human decay and mortality, as well as a strong consolation on the occasion of the removal of our beloved friends from time to eternity. 5. Shows us the fitness and propriety of that decent and reverential respect, which in Christian lands is ordinarily paid to the interment even of the mortal remains of departed and glorified friends? 6. Ought to convince us of the necessity of glorifying God with our bodies as well as our spirits.

—Jabez Bunting.

Peace of God.

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:7.

This is not a wish or prayer, like the benediction of 2 Thess. 3:16; nor a precept like Col. 3:15; but is one of the exceeding great and precious promises. The world is weary for peace; the army after a long campaign, the country bearing the burden of a protracted war, longs for peace; but not more earnestly than men tossed on the waves of this troublesome world. This blessing is for the spirit satiated with the vain pleasures of the world; for the spirit tried with sorrow; for the Pharisee tormented with the incumbrances of his over-righteousness; for the publican standing on the threshold.

I. *Its Source.* 1. It originates with Him. Man by sin has placed himself in antagonism to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." The transgression and enmity were ours, yet God devised means whereby the banished might be restored, and sends to rebels the ambassadors of peace. It was not from man the sinner that the overtures were made. 2. It has reference to Him. It is not only peace from, but with, God. The ambassadors are sent. God has devised the means, has made peace. It is no imaginary reconciliation; it is a peace wrought by real means, purchased at a real price—the blood of the Son of God (Col. 2:14). And when the sentence of condemnation is blotted out there is no condemnation to those who believe (Rom. 5:1; 8:1). This act is the foundation of all peace in the heart. It is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

II. *Its Character.* It passeth understanding because—1. Man unaided cannot attain to it. There are many voices which cry to man of pleasure and rest. But they are delusive. "Peace," they cry, when there is no peace. Wherever sin is there is unrest. There is no peace to the wicked. They "are like the troubled sea which cannot rest," continually straining after some haven of repose, but only to be cast back by the waves of passion. And not only cannot the sinner, unaided, attain this peace; he cannot, unaided, even receive it when provided for him. The things which belong to his peace are hidden from him. But this does not make void his responsibility. God hath revealed it by His Spirit, whom He gives to those who ask for Him. 2. There are depths in it which the richest Christian experience cannot fathom. There are mysteries in grace as well as in nature and providence. The source of this peace is God, and its guarantee the love of Christ which pass-

eth knowledge. All the gifts of God are inexhaustible.

III. *Its Effect.*—"Shall guard." Our hearts and minds are in need of continual guardianship, and where shall we meet with one more reliable? 1. It can keep our hearts. We understand by the heart the source of the affections and passions; but not unfrequently the inspired writers use the word to signify the affections and understanding acting together. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The affections are apt to stray from their centre. There is a fatal affinity between the evil within and the veil without. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," etc. It needs a strong power to watch over it, but the peace of God is equal to this. There is a strength in it to stay your stray reflections; for it gives you in your heart something on which your love may centre. The lustre of the ball-room and the gaudy trappings of the stage look tawdry in the daylight; and the loves of the earth look tinsel indeed in the light of a Saviour's love and the brightness

of the peace of God. 2. The mind. That is prone to be carried off by merely speculative problems. The peace of God keeps the mind not by enslaving its faculties or starving their energy, but by rightly balancing them. By giving us a clear conception of the relative values of things temporal and eternal, by revealing the due order which presides over all God's works, we are taught to estimate aright the true value of speculative and practical problems. 3. Both the heart and mind are kept. In some natures the thinking faculty is the most active: such are in danger of neglecting the keeping of the heart—the spirit of devotion. Others are exposed to the reverse temptation. To neglect either is injurious. Let us give to each its sustenance; storing our minds with Divine truth and yet increasing in love and grace.

IV. *The Channel Through Which It Comes.* There is no blessing which comes not through Him—in nature, Providence, salvation. He is our peace.—W. Boyd Carpenter.

COLOSSIANS

Head of the Church.

"And he is the head of the body, the Church."—Colossians 1:18.

I. *What Is Meant by Our Lord's Headship?* 1. His representation of the Church as a body. At the first creation God dealt with the race as represented in Adam—hence original sin. In order to Salvation, which was only possible, perhaps, because we did not fall singly, God instituted a second federation, of which Christ is the Head, the second Adam. Christians are chosen, accepted, and preserved in Him. 2. Our Lord is Head in a mystical sense (Col. 2:19). (1)

The head is indispensable of life; so Jesus is the vitalising Head of all His people. "He is our life." Separation from Him is spiritual death. (2) The head is the throne of supreme government. It is from the brain that the mandate issues which uplifts the hand, etc. Thus in the Church Christ is the great directing Head; from Him the only binding commands go forth; to Him the spiritual yield a cheerful homage. (3) The head is the glory of the body. There the chief beauty of manhood dwells. Christ is fairer than the children of men, and in Him the beauty of the Church is summed up. 3. Christ's Headship is conjugal. He

is the Bridegroom, the Church is His Bride. As the husband exercises headship in the house, not at all tyrannical or magisterial, but founded upon the rule of nature and endorsed by the consent of love, so Christ rules in His Church, not as a despot compelling His subject bride against her will, but as a husband well beloved, obtaining obedience from the heart. 4. Christ is Head as King in Zion. "One is your Master," etc. To no other do we render spiritual obeisance. Martyrs have bled for this truth. Some churches have not learned it.

II. What It Implies. Since Christ Is Head of the Church—1. He alone can determine doctrines for her. It is nothing that a doctrine comes down with grey antiquity to make it venerable. All the fathers, divines, and confessors put together cannot add a word to the faith once delivered to the saints. Nothing is doctrine to the Church but what is contained in the Scriptures. 2. He only can legislate for the Church. In a state, if a knot of persons should profess to make laws for the kingdom they would be amenable to punishment. So the Church has no power to make laws for herself since she is not her own head; and no one has any right to make laws for her but Christ. 3. He is the living administrator in the Church; but as monarchs often administer through lieutenants, so Christ administers through His Spirit who dwells in the hearts of His people. When we search the Law Book He is their guide. 4. This sole authority must be maintained rigorously. (1) Some would have us guided by results. It has been discussed whether missions should continue since there are so few converts. But how can the question be raised when He has said, "Go ye into all the world," etc. (2) We are not to be guided by the times. Our King and laws are the same, and let the times

be scientific or barbaric, our duty is the same.

III. On What Does It Rest? 1. On the natural supremacy of Christ's nature. He is perfect man and God over all blessed for ever. 2. On His redemption. 3. On His conquest. 4. On the Divine decree (Psa. 2.).

IV. What Does It Teach? 1. Does it not make each inquire, "If the entire Church is to yield this obedience, am I yielding it? 2. Am I in the habit of judging according to my wishes or according to the Statute Book of the King?"—C. H. Spurgeon.

The Reconciling Son.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."—Colossians 1:19.

I. As Before We Have Christ in Relation to God.

1. In the use of the term "fulness," which was a very important term in Gnostic speculations, there is a reference to some of the heretical teachers' expressions. What fulness? (chap. 2:9). The abundance or totality of the Divine attributes. We have no need to look to nature for fragmentary revelations of God's character—that He has fully and finally declared in His Son.

2. "Dwell" implies permanent abode, chosen, perhaps, to oppose the view that the union of the Divine and human in Christ was but temporary.

3. This is the result of the Father's good pleasure. The Father determined the work of the Son, and delighted in it.

II. Again, as before, we have Christ and the Universe, of which He is not only the Maker, sustainer, and Lord, but through the blood of the Cross reconciles all things to Himself. Probably the false teachers had dreams of reconciling agents.

Paul lifts up in opposition the one Sovereign Mediator whose Cross is the bond of peace for the universe.

1. Observe the distinct reference of these words to the former clauses. "Through Him" was creation; "through Him" is reconciliation. "All things" were made, sustained by, and subordinated to Him; the same "all things" are reconciled. A significant change in the order is noticeable. "In the heavens and upon the earth" the order of creation; but in reconciliation the order is reversed.

2. The correspondence shows that the reconciliation affects not only rational and responsible creatures, but "things." The width of reconciliation is the same as that of the creation. Then these words refer mainly to the restitution of the material universe to its primal obedience, and represent Christ the Creator removing by His Cross the shadow that has passed over nature by reason of sin.

3. Man's sin has made the physical world "subject to vanity." Man by sin has compelled dead matter to be his instrument in acts of rebellion against God. He has polluted the world by sin, and laid unnumbered woes on the living creatures. This evil shall be done away by the reconciling power of the blood of the Cross. The universe is one because the Cross pierces its heights and depths.

4. The reference to things in heaven may also be occasioned by the dreams of the heretical teachers. As to reconciliation proper among spiritual beings in that realm, there can be no question of it. There is no enmity among angels. Still, if the reference be to them, then we know that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the Cross has been the teacher of unlearned depths in the Divine nature and purposes, the knowledge of which has drawn them nearer to the heart of God and made their union with Him more blessed and close.

5. Sublime and great beyond all our dreams shall be the issue. Certain as the throne of God is it that His purposes shall be accomplished. The great sight of the Seer of Patmos is the best commentary on our text. (Rev. 5:9-13).

III. *Christ and His Reconciling Work in the Church.* We have still the parallel kept up. As in verse 18 He was represented as giving life to the Church in a higher fashion than to the universe, so, with a similar heightening of the meaning of reconciliation, He is here set forth as its giver to the Church.

1. Observe the solemn description of men before it. "Alienated," not "aliens," but having become so. The seat of the enmity is in that inner man which thinks and wills, and its sphere of manifestation is "in evil works" which are religiously acts of hostility to God because morally bad. This is thought nowadays a too harsh description. But the charge is not that of conscious, active hostility, but of practical want of affection as manifested by habitual disobedience or inattention to God's wishes and by indifference and separation from Him in heart and mind.

2. Here as uniformly God Himself is the Reconciler, it is we who are reconciled. The Divine patience loves on through all our enmity, and though perfect love meeting human sin must ever become wrath, it never becomes hatred.

3. The means of reconciliation. (1) "The body," etc., an exuberance of language to correct, perhaps, the error of that our Lord's body was only a phantasm, or to guard against the risk of confounding it with "His body the Church," or as showing how full His mind was of the overwhelming wonder of the fact. (2) But the Incarnation is not the whole Gospel; "through death" Christ's death has so met the requirements of the Divine law, that Divine love can come

freely forth and forgive sinful men.—
A. Maclaren.

The Atonement.

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death."—Colossians 1:21-23.

I. *The Influence of the Blood of the Cross on God.* "Peace" cannot mean the actual reconciliation of man to God, for it is prior to and with the design of afterwards effecting it. It must therefore have been peace that looked toward God, for He is the only other party to the enmity. But this could not have been a change in God Himself or His purposes, for He is immutable; nor any alteration in His feelings towards sin, for that must ever be the abominable thing which He hates; still less the purchase of His love for man, for the whole purpose of reconciliation sprang out of His "pleasure." But it is the effect produced by the death of Christ upon God's moral government, so that it became possible for Him to forgive righteously. It will follow—1. That they are greatly in error who maintain that the only purpose of Christ's death was to reconcile man to God by the simple manifestation of Divine love. The fact is there are two elements in the Cross—love and righteousness—and we must allow neither to overshadow the other. If we do, in one case the Gospel will assume an appearance of terror. 2. That they are greatly in error who make little

of the death of Christ. "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

II. *The Blood of the Cross as It Respects Man.* "Things on earth" may perhaps be taken to mean the whole lower creation which "groans and travails in pain," etc.; but as the curse passed on the earth through man, so must the blessing. How, then, are men reconciled to God? More than pardon through the satisfaction of God's justice was needed; for sin has not only broken the law, but filled the sinner's heart with enmity against God. But—1. The atonement of Christ has also secured the Holy Spirit for the regeneration of human hearts. 2. Then the Spirit uses the story of Christ's love and death to remove the enmity. All along the sinner has been misjudging God; but when he, through the Spirit, is led to see that God has given Christ to secure his pardon, he discovers that he has done God the foulest wrong, and returns in penitence and affection to Him.

III. *The Blood of the Cross as It Affects Angels.* They, of course, cannot be reconciled in the strict sense of the term; but the work of Christ has let them see further into the heart of God, drawn them nearer to Him, and given them a higher degree of blessedness. Conclusion: 1. All obstacles have been taken out of the way of a sinner's salvation as far as God is concerned. If they are not saved, it is because they reject God's overtures of reconciliation. 2. If the sinner passes from earth unreconciled, there is no salvation for him. The text says nothing of "things under the earth."—W. M. Taylor.

1 THESSALONIANS

God's Trumpet.

"For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord."—1 Thessalonians 1:8.

The apostle employs a word never used anywhere else in the New Testament to describe the conspicuous and widespread nature of this testimony of theirs. He says, "The Word of the Lord sounded out" from them. That phrase is one most naturally employed to describe the blast of a trumpet. So clear and ringing, so loud, penetrating, melodious, rousing, and full was their proclamation, by the silent eloquence of their lives, of the Gospel which impelled and enabled them to lead such lives. A grand ideal of a community of believers!

I. This metaphor suggests *The Great Purpose of the Church*.—It is God's trumpet. His means of making His voice heard through all the uproar of the world. As the captain upon the deck in the gale will use his speaking trumpet, so God's voice needs your voice. The Gospel needs to be passed through human lips in order that it may reach deaf ears. The Church is worse than "sounding brass," it is as silent brass and an untinkling cymbal, unless the individuals that belong to it recognise God's meaning in making them His children, and do their best to fulfil it. "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord. You are put into the witness-box, see that you speak out when you are there.

II. Another point that this figure may suggest is *The Sort of Sound that Should Come from the Trumpet*.—1. A trumpet-note is, first of all, clear. There should be no hesitation in our witness; nothing uncertain in

the sound that we give. 2. The note should be penetrating. There is no instrument, I suppose, that carries farther than the ringing clarion that is often heard on the field of battle, above all the strife. And so this little church at Thessalonica, a mere handful of people, just converted, in the very centre of a strong, compact, organised, self-confident, supercilious heathenism, insisted upon being heard, and got itself made audible, simply by the purity and the consistency of the lives of its members. A clear voice will fling words to a distance that a thick, mumbling one never can attain. One note will travel much farther than another. Do you see to it that your notes are of the penetrating sort. 3. And then, again, the note should be a musical one. There is nothing to be done for God by harshness; nothing to be done by discords and jangling; nothing to be done by scolding and rebuke. The ordered sequence of melodious sound will travel a great deal further than unmusical, plain speech. You can hear a song at a distance at which a saying would be inaudible. Which thing is an allegory, and this is its lesson. Music goes further than discord; and the witness that a Christian man bears will travel in direct proportion as it is harmonious and gracious and gentle and beautiful. 4. And then, again, the note should be rousing. You do not play on a trumpet when you want to send people to sleep; dulcimers and the like are the things for that purpose. The trumpet means strung-up intensity, means a call to arms, or to rejoicing; means, at any rate, vigour, and is intended to rouse. Let your witness have for its inmost signification, "Awake! thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

III. Then, still further, take another thought that may be suggested from this metaphor, *The Silence of the Loudest Note*.—If you look at the context, you will see that all the ways in which the Word of the Lord is represented as sounding out from the Thessalonian Church were deeds, not words. The context supplies a number of them. Such as the following are specified in it: their work; their toil, which is more than work; their patience; their assurance; their reception of the Word, in much affliction with joy in the Holy Ghost; their faith to Godward; their turning to God from idols, to serve and to wait. That is all. So far as the context goes there might not have been a man amongst them that ever opened His mouth for Jesus Christ. We know not, of course, how far they were a congregation of silent witnesses, but this we know, that what Paul meant when he said, "The whole world is ringing with the voice of the Word of God sounding from you," was not their going up and down the world shouting about their Christianity, but their quiet living like Jesus Christ. That is a louder voice than any other. I do not mean to say that Christian men and women are at liberty to lock their lips from verbal proclamation of the Saviour they have found, but I do mean to say that if there was less talk and more living the witness of God's Church would be louder and not lower; "and men would take knowledge of us, that we had been with Jesus"; and of Jesus, that He had made us like Himself.

IV. And so, lastly, let me draw one other thought from this metaphor, which I hope you will not think fanciful playing with a figure; and that is the *Breath that Makes the Music*.—If the Church is the trumpet, who blows it? God! It is by His Divine Spirit dwelling within us and breathing through us that the harsh

discords of our natural lives become changed into melody of praise and the music of witness for Him. Keep near Christ, live in communion with God, let Him breathe through you, and when His Spirit passes through your spirits their silence will become harmonious speech and from you "will sound out the Word of the Lord."—A. Maclaren.

The Second Advent of Christ.

"And to wait for his Son from heaven."—1 Thessalonians 1:10.

I. *The Certainty of the Advent*.—Of this, according to the unbroken statements of the New Testament, there is not the shadow of a doubt; but I would observe—1. The time of the coming is an uncertainty. If you examine a few of the statements with reference to that uncertainty, you will find a statement in the New Testament as to that coming being a thing near. In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the fourth chapter, and the fifteenth verse, you read—"For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." Whereas, in the second Epistle, the second chapter and the third verse, you find the statement which implies that that coming was not immediate: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." You will find in the Epistle to the Hebrews the same apparently contradictory statements. Then you find in the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle of Peter—"The end of all things is at hand." Again, in the third chapter, the ninth verse, of the second Epistle of Peter, you find the apostle speaking of the Lord being "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any

should perish." You have the same apparent conflict of statement in our blessed Lord's own words. Thus in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirty-fourth verse, He says—"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"; which seems to intimate a near approach of the second coming. Then you find in the nineteenth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter, in the parable of the talents—"After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." Again there is another class of statements which expressly and distinctly avers that the time of the second coming is left in uncertainty. Thus, you find in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the forty-second verse—"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And you find a still more remarkable statement in the Gospel of St. Mark—"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"; that is—the Lord Jesus in His human nature was not at that time acquainted with the day of His Second Advent. What, then, is the result which the Word of God seems intended to produce by this apparent conflict of statement? I believe the result which it intends to produce is this—that we should be always on the watch for the second coming of our blessed Lord. There is a tendency in some minds to anticipate that coming, to affirm and believe that that coming is immediately at hand. The Christians at Thessalonica were in danger of thus putting away temporal duties, and neglecting the present calls of life, in order that they might be ready for that which they immediately expected. There is a tendency in other minds to defer and put off that day, to think that it is sure not to take place soon; and thus to live an indolent, a listless and a comparatively indifferent life, as regards that grand object

of our hope. Now, if we read the New Testament aright, and if we receive the impression which these various passages are intended to leave upon our minds, with reference to the certainty of the fact and the uncertainty of the coming, I believe that the effect produced will be to make us feel that the Lord's coming, though uncertain at any moment, is possible at any moment. It will produce that state of expectancy, and that state of preparedness and desire with reference to it, in which our Lord sees to be the fittest condition for the spirits of His people to live and be. 2. The grand object presented. I can hardly read without emotion of the anticipation of the first Advent, on the part of the pious Jews, who preceded that advent. But how much grander and more sublime is that which is the object of our hope—the Second Advent; the Lord Jesus coming, not in humiliation, but in glory; not in weakness, but in power; not to suffer, but to reign! And when we think of all the attendant circumstances which are predicted—the rapture of the saints, the descent of the Lord from heaven, the Judgment, the binding of Satan, the renewal of this earth, and all those grand scenes to be produced by His glory—who can look at this great object of our hope without feeling his spirit awed and solemnized, without feeling that we have presented to us in the Bible one of the sublimest and most glorious objects which it is possible for the mind of man to conceive, as that upon which our hope is to rest, as that to which our expectations are to tend?

II. The Influence Which This Hope Is Designed To Exercise.—1. Holiness. "Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Now, it is impossible for a person who is living in daily anticipation of the second coming of Jesus, impossible for a believer in Christ

whose mind is constantly turning towards that glorious appearing, to do otherwise than endeavour to have his moral image conformed, as highly as it can be, to the moral image of Him whom he is expecting; and that it lies in the very essential nature of man, that if in love and hearty faith he is expecting the coming of the Lord, he must seek to purify himself even as his Lord is pure. 2. Gratitude and love. There is a very emphatic word at the close of our text, where the Apostle says that we are expecting Jesus "which delivered us from the wrath to come." Consider what that wrath is! Who it is that has delivered us! Consider how He has delivered us—not by handing over some mercenary ransom, but by giving Himself to suffer and to die; and that it is through this purchase Christ has paid that He has accomplished this mighty deliverance; and then say whether the anticipation of meeting Him must not produce, in the mind of him who has this hope, an earnest feeling of gratitude and devoted love to Him, to whom he owes his salvation and his glory. 3. Unworldliness. If a man is living in anticipation of the advent of Christ, it is impossible for him to be so wholly immersed in the cares and pleasures and businesses of this world, as is the case with too many professing Christians. If we were certain that the coming of the Lord were nigh at hand, would any Christian be unduly engrossed with the things of the world? No. "Use the world, and not abuse it."—E. Bayley.

Fulness of Sins.

"Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."
—1 Thessalonians, 2: 16.

"To fill up their sins alway." This is a terrible and mysterious expression. Some light may be gained by considering it in relation to the history of the Jews, as it is of these people that it is here written. They had accumulated sin upon sin in slaying Christ and the prophets, in expelling the apostles from their communion, and finally in hindering the Gentiles from receiving that Gospel which they had rejected for themselves. But there was to come an end to this tale of wickedness. The time was drawing near when the Jews would no longer have power to hurt the cause of Christianity, and when swift punishment for their accumulated iniquities would descend in the destruction of their city and nation. They were hastening to fill up the sins which must issue in this fearful doom.

I. *The Greatest Sin Is That of Sinning Without Restraint.*—It is a mistake to speak of every sin as of infinite guilt, or of all sins as equally guilty. Such an assertion is not only false, it tends either to despair or to reckless excess in sinning. However far one has gone in sin, it is better to stop than to go on to greater enormities. To be adding sin to sin, and to be sinning "alway," are signs of reckless, abandoned depravity.

II. *There Is a Fulness of Sins Which Brings Its Own Penalty.*—When sin reaches this point the penalty can no longer be stayed. The cup once full flows over in wrath and ruin. It is as though forbearance and guilt were in the scales. When guilt is full the balance dips. There is an end to all possible longsuffering. The more men go on in excesses of sin, the faster do they approach the inevitable day of reckoning. The sooner the sin is filled up to the measure which passes endurance, the sooner must the stroke of doom fall.

III. *Fulness of Sins Must Lead to Fulness of Punishment.*—They who fill up their sins always will have

the wrath "come upon them to the uttermost." The worst debtor must be made to pay the last farthing. The swifter the rush downhill, the greater the crash at the bottom. The more tares that are sown in spring, the more bundles to burn in harvest. He who fills the present life with sins will have the next life filled with wrath.

IV. There Seems To Be a Limit to Sins.—There is a fulness of sins. There is no fulness of virtues; these can be developed indefinitely. The good man is growing up to a perfection. The bad man is being corrupted, not to a perfection, but to a fulness. Evil has its limits; goodness has none. Satan is let loose for a time. God restrains the wrath of the wicked. Sin, through rebellion against God, cannot break away from all Divine control. Sins are limited by several means: 1. *Capacity.* We have a limited power of sinning. 2. *Time* God sometimes cuts the sinner off in the midst of his days and brings the guilty nation to destruction. 3. *Providential control.* The fulness of sins is not the amount which God predestines to be committed, for God is not the author of sin, nor does He will or permit it. This fulness is the measure beyond which God stays the evil from proceeding. When the tide of iniquity, driven onwards by rebellious powers, reaches this fulness, God says, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed," and the storm beats itself out in impotent fury.—W. F. Adeney.

The Hinderer.

"*Satan hindered us.*"—1 Thessalonians 2: 18.

All agree about the hindrances, but some deny that there is a personal hinderer. They hoot at the idea that a God of infinite power and benefi-

cence would permit so malignant a rebel to exist. But where have such people lived? There are thousands of visible devils, why not one invisible? The devil hinders—

I. *By Suggesting Doubts.*—The terrible catastrophe of the fall was accomplished by a doubt. One of his greatest achievements is to create the doubt of his own existence. We live in an age in which nearly everything that is necessary to be believed is doubted. Depravity is seen in nothing more clearly than the manner in which people act when in doubt religiously. Instead of wisely protecting our own interests, we often give Satan the benefit of our doubts. Nothing pleases Satan so well as to get people in doubt as to the Atonement, the Bible, Judgment, Hell, &c. If he can do this, he will soon have them acting in accordance with their doubts.

II. *By Magnifying Difficulties.*—By this means he hinders multitudes, young and old, from giving their hearts to God. He is not honest enough to tell people that this life is one of difficulty, whether they are good or bad; but insinuates that the most crushing difficulties are in the paths of righteousness. But he is a liar. We are not at home yet, only at school. Our work is to master the hard curriculum; but God's cheering promise is, "All things work together for good," &c.

III. *By Distractions.*—He dislikes a fixed purpose for the right, and loves to disincline the mind to think on eternal realities. He does not mind men being piously inclined and purposing to do better. If he can keep them from immediate surrender, he knows that all the rest will be of no avail in the final issue. Conclusion: 1. As a hinderer Satan is the cause of two things—(1) Much that we would do but cannot. Paul's visit to Thessalonica was frustrated. (2) Much that we could do if we would: as our sins of commission. 2. Our

helper is greater than our hinderer.
—T. Kelly.

Sanctification.

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."—1 Thessalonians 4:3.

I. Distinguish It from Related Terms.—From 1. Regeneration is once for all done, and is the beginning of holiness, whereas sanctification is its progressive advancement. One is the implantation of holy principles and affections; the other their issue in a holy character. 2. Justification, while it does not exclude the present, has special reference to the past, while sanctification is chiefly directed to the present and the future. The one is something done for us, the other something done in us. The one is a change of relation, the other a change of character. The one implies pardon, the other purity. 3. Morality. This may exist without sanctification, as is seen in the lives of many worldly men. But sanctification cannot exist without morality. Morality is not to be disparaged; but there is no perfection without Christ.

II. What Do We Mean by Sanctification?—Religion implanted in the heart and conspicuous in the life. 1. "The kingdom of God is within you." Christianity begins in the heart, and forms the life by forming the dispositions. It works from centre to circumference. It does not consist in having, but in being. 2. Its fruits will always be apparent. Grace in the germ is hidden, but it is always manifest in the life. It is a light that shines, a fire that burns. How grace grows is a mystery; but when grown it is read and known of all men. Your life as to its source and supply is "hid with Christ in God"; but as to its practical effect, it is "a city set on a hill."

III. Its Cause.—1. The ultimate cause is God the Holy Ghost. Men may fashion a block of stone into the figure of a man, so admirably that the sculpture seems to look, and breathe, and speak; but it is not a man. It is merely an image; it wants life, which no created power can give. So it is here. Spiritual life in all its stages is a direct inspiration from God, and impossible without such inspiration. And He who gives life alone can sustain it. 2. The instrumental cause is truth. "Of his own will begat he us," &c. "Sanctify them through thy truth." Sanctification is the effect not of the separate, but conjoint influence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and the Word on the understanding, the one removing prejudice, the other dispersing ignorance.

IV. Sanctification Is a Progressive and Harmonious Work.—1. Where there is life there will be progress—in vegetation, physically, mentally, and spiritually, and in each case gradually. 2. This is a process that affects the whole manhood, a harmonious development of an entire Christian character. Just as in the healthful growth of a tree there is growth, not only of the roots but the shoots, branches, foliage, and fruit; so in the Christian the development is not of one grace, but all. There is much diversity. Grace does not produce uniformity in the human character; but still the finest specimen of a Christian is the man in whom all graces are in their proportion. 3. Its beginning is here, but its progress for ever. Heaven begins on earth, and earth merges into heaven.

V. Sanctification Is the Will of God.—Not simply the command, but the good pleasure of God. 1. It is necessarily so. He who is Light cannot love darkness; He who is Life cannot love death. 2. It is wrought in harmony with the nature of the human will. God works in what we

have to work out. 3. What an encouragement is this! In all our struggles after goodness we may be sure of Divine sympathy and help. 4. With what solemnity does this invest the subject, for it follows that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.—J. Davies.

The Second Coming of Christ.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout."—
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

I. *The Lord's Descent*.—“He” and no other, in His august personal presence, in that same human body, too, with which He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11). And yet, while Himself unchanged, how changed the surroundings! He will descend, not in humiliation to tabernacle with men, but to take His people to Himself in heaven; not emptied of His glory, but with the symbols of majesty and Divine power. 1. With a shout, one which indicates command. The word is used of a charioteer’s call to his steed, a huntsman’s call to his dogs, the call, by voice or sign, of the boatswain giving time to the rowers, the music played to set an army or fleet in motion. The angelic host and company of the spirits of the just are compared to a vast army, and Christ, the Captain of salvation, by His word of command, sets it in motion, and it, in the alacrity of joyful obedience, accompanies Him to judgment (Jude, ver. 14). The shout will possibly be, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” 2. The voice of the archangel. “The Lord Himself” and “the archangel” cannot be identified. Here and in Jude, verse 9, the word designates the leader of the angelic hosts. Angels have been, and will yet be, Christ’s ministering spirits. They served Him when on earth; they as-

cend and descend upon Him in the advancement of His cause; they will be His ministers of judgment hereafter. The shout may be that of command caught up by the archangel from the lips of the Lord, and repeated to the gathering hosts. 3. The trump of God, belonging to God, used in His service; that probably of Rev. 11:15. Under the old dispensation there is special prominence assigned to the trumpet. By it assemblies were summoned, journeys started, feasts proclaimed. It is employed by our Lord, as in the text. Paul calls this “the last” (1 Cor. 15:52); and as such it will gather up all previous meanings. It will call together the rejoicing saints to the heavenly Zion; like Joshua’s trumpet it will be to some the signal of dismay; it wil’ mean weal or woe according to the character of those who hear.

II. *The Resurrection and Change of Christ’s People at His Coming*.

1. “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” The emphasis rests on “first,” and is designed to bring comfort to the Thessalonian mourners. Their departed friends, so far from being placed at a disadvantage, were to occupy a position of privilege. Those who are living will be “caught up.” “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,” not unclothed of their bodies, but clothed upon with immortality, a kind of death and resurrection in one. Thus changed, these shall be caught up “together” with the others in one united and rejoicing company; “caught up” with a quick and resistless rapture, as the word implies, rising from the troubled and imperfect earth—changed and sublimated, as the blossom of the fabled Indian tree, transformed into a bird, flies upward into heaven. “In the clouds”; not into, nor in multitudes (Heb. 12:1), but as if in a triumphal chariot. Nor do clouds represent a veiling of the awful transaction, but simply supply an imagery

which lends grandeur and awe to that event which is awful beyond all human language and thought. 2. The meeting-place: "In the air." We naturally place alongside this the ascension of Elijah, or that of our Lord. In this, as in all else, He has gone before His people and pointed out for them the way. "The air" is not the atmosphere, but infinite space as opposed to earth. The ancients fancied that the milky way is the path trod by the immortals to the palace of the King. The fable is but a distorted reflection of the truth. What it fancied the apostle declared—a pathway in the skies on which the saints are yet to pass to meet their Lord, that He may conduct them home. 3. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." Less than this can never satisfy Christ's saints; more than this they cannot desire or conceive—perfect security, sinlessness, happiness, glory.—J. Hutchison.

Quenching the Spirit.

"*Quench not the spirit.*"—1 Thessalonians 5:19.

I. *How Does the Spirit Influence the Mind?* Not by physical agency but by means of the truth. He persuades men to act in view of truth as we influence our fellows by truth presented to their minds. Sometimes this truth is suggested by providence, sometimes by preaching; but whatever the mode the object always is to produce voluntary action in conformity to His law.

II. *What Is Implied in This Fact and What Must Be Inferred from it.*

1. God is physically omnipotent, and yet His moral influences exerted by His Spirit may be resisted; but if the Spirit moved men by physical omnipotence there could be no resistance. The nature of moral agency implies the voluntary action of one

who can yield to motive and follow light or not as he pleases. When this power does not exist moral agency cannot exist. Hence if our action is that of moral agents, our freedom to do or not do must remain.

2. If the Lord carries forward the work by means of revealed truth there must be most imminent danger lest some will neglect to study and understand it, or lest, knowing, they should refuse to obey it.

III. What Is It to Quench the Spirit?

1. The Spirit enlightens the mind into the meaning and self-application of the Bible. Now there is such a thing as refusing to receive this light. You can shut your eyes against it; you can refuse to follow it when seen; and in this case God ceases to hold up the truth before your mind.

2. There is a heat and vitality attending the truth when enforced by the Spirit. If one has the Spirit his soul is warm; if not his heart is cold. Let a man resist the Spirit and he will certainly quench this vital energy.

IV. The Ways in Which the Spirit May Be Quenched.

1. By directly resisting the truth He presents to the mind. After a short struggle the conflict is over, and that particular truth ceases to affect the mind. The man felt greatly annoyed by that truth until he quenched the Spirit; now he is annoyed by it no longer.

2. By endeavouring to support error. Men are foolish enough to attempt by argument to support a position which they know to be false. They argue it till they get committed, and thus quench the Spirit, and are left to believe in the very lie they unwisely attempted to advocate.

3. By uncharitable judgments, which are so averse to that love which is the fruit of the Spirit.

4. By bad temper, harsh, and vituperative language, and intemperate

excitement on any subject whether religious or otherwise.

5. By indulging prejudice. Whenever the mind is made up on any subject before it is thoroughly canvassed, that mind is shut against the truth and the Spirit is quenched.

6. By violating conscience. Persons have had a very tender conscience on some subject, but all at once they come to have no conscience at all on that point. Change of conscience, of course, often results from conscientious change of views. But sometimes the mind is awakened, just on the eve of committing a sin. A strange presentiment warns the man to desist. If he goes on the whole mind receives a dreadful shock, and its very eyes seem to be almost put out.

7. By indulging appetites and passions. These not only injure the body but the soul; and God sometimes gives men up to them.

8. By dishonesty and sharp practices in business.

9. By casting off fear and restraining prayer.

10. By idle conversation, levity, and trifling.

11. By indolence and procrastination.

12. By resisting the doctrine and duty of sanctification.

V. The Consequence of Quenching the Spirit.

1. Great darkness of mind. Abandoned by God, the mind sees truth so dimly that it makes no useful impression.

2. Great coldness and stupidity in regard to religion generally. It leaves to the mind no such interest in spiritual things as men take in worldly things. Get up a political meeting or a theatrical exhibition, and their souls are all on fire; but they are not at the prayer meeting.

3. Error. The heart wanders from God, loses its hold on truth, and perhaps the man insists that he takes

now a much more liberal and enlightened view of the subject and, it may be, gradually slides into infidelity.

4. Great hardness of heart. The mind becomes callous to all that class of truths which make it yielding and tender.

5. Deep delusion with regard to one's spiritual state. How often people justify themselves in manifest wrong because they put darkness for light and vice versa.—C. G. Finney.

The Right of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—1 Thessalonians 5:21.

I. Objections That Are Taken Against the Exercise of This Right.—It is said that if this be granted then every individual will have his own religion. 1. Our answer to this is, such would be a consequence not of the exercise of private judgment, but of human depravity. If imperfect men had all the privileges of angels, consequences would follow very different from those characterising the history of angels, but no one would say that they were the necessary effects of the enjoyment of angelic privileges. If, then, instead of assailing the depravity of man for abusing the right of private judgment we assail that right and forbid its exercise, we are mistaking the source of the evil and not taking the proper method to prevent it. 2. Then we may ask how interdicting the right can prevent the evil consequences? Shall we issue a decree and enforce it by penalties? But that will only stop the expression, and will not interfere with the right of private judgment. The slave clad in iron fetters has still his private judgment, and with his mind, which is free, you cannot

meddle. 3. But it may be affirmed that to suppress this expression is a good thing, and prevents evil. How so? This supposes an infallible instructor. How do we know that the public judgment of any body of men may not be as pernicious as the private judgment of an individual? Look at the past. Almost every heresy has at one time been protected and taught by public authority, and almost every orthodox sentiment has been put down by the same.

II. Consideration in Support of This Right.—1. We find from Scripture that the right of private judgment in religious matters is the duty, not merely the privilege, of every individual to whom the Word of God should come. (1) This Epistle was addressed to the Church, not to any public functionary. Paul, Timothy, and Silas, inspired teachers of the mind of God, say, "Prove all things." If any say that the laity must defer to authority, the authority here says exercise your private judgment! Then what is the meaning of the general addresses to the Churches, as such, at the commencement of each Epistle, but that the minds of laymen as well as ministers should be exercised upon them? (2) When we come to Epistles addressed to individuals such as Timothy and Titus we find nothing investing them with the authority of interpreting against the private judgment of those they taught. Nay, they are commanded "in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves," not to dictate to them on the ground of authority. (3) Then we have the doctrine that every one of us must give an account of himself to God, which implies the exercise of private judgment. How can we reconcile this with being compelled to follow the dictates of another? Shall we give an account of ourselves to God at the last whilst we are permitted to take no account of ourselves? Shall we carry mental

slavery with us all the time we are in our state of probation, and in eternity only stand on our own foundation? Nay; if God tells us that every one of us must give an account then He means that we must prove all things against the day of that account. 2. The arguments derived from the powers and faculties that God has given us are no less conclusive. Why did God give us the power of judging at all? Is it possible that God would give men the exercise of public judgment for the things of time and forbid it in the affairs of eternity?

III. Duties Consequent upon This Right.—1. Seaching the Scriptures. We criminate ourselves deeply if we contend for the right of private judgment and neglect to search those oracles about which alone the faculty can be engaged. What should we think of a judge who insisted on his right to pronounce judgment while ignorant of the matter on which the judgment was to be pronounced. 2. Stimulating others by teaching them the great things of God. If it be our duty to search the Scriptures it is the duty of all. It is incumbent on us, then, not only to practise, but to encourage this exercise. 3. Duly appreciating the falsehood that revelation trammels the mind. On the contrary the text breaks every mental bond.—J. Burnet.

Sanctification.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly."—1 Thessalonians 5:23.

I. The Agent in our Sanctification Is the Spirit of God (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:14; see also Rom. 8). By the Father we are sanctified, as we are chosen by Him unto sanctification; as by His good pleasure and free grace the atone-

ment of Christ and the sanctifying agency of the Spirit exist. By the Son we are sanctified, as His death is the only means by which we ever become holy, and by which the Spirit came into the world for the benevolent purpose of making us holy. By the Spirit we are sanctified as the immediate Agent in applying to us the blessings of Christ's redemption, particularly in renewing and purifying our hearts and lives. Thus, although this work is immediately performed by the Spirit as the proper Agent, yet we are truly, though more remotely, said to be sanctified by the Father, by the Son, and by the Godhead universally considered.

II. The Instruments of Our Sanctification Are Generally the Word and Providence of God.

1. The Word of God is the means of our sanctification in all cases in which it contributes to render us better, whether it be read, heard, or remembered; whether it be pondered with love, reverence, wonder, or delight; or whether, with similar affections, it be faithfully obeyed; whether its instructions and impressions be communicated to us directly, or through the medium of Divine ordinances, or the conversation, or the communion, or the example of our fellow-Christians. The Providence of God becomes the means of our sanctification in all the ways in which it makes solemn and religious impressions on the mind.

III. The Process of Sanctification May Be Summarily Exhibited in the Following Manner.

1. It is progressive through life. The first sanctifying act of the Spirit of God is employed in regenerating the soul. Succeeding acts of the same nature are employed in purifying it through all the successive periods of life.

2. This process is not uniform. By this I intend that it is not the same in manner or degree every day,

month, or year. From whatever cause it arises, our views are at times brighter, our vigilance more active, our resolution stronger, our temper more serene, and our energy more vigorous than at other times. This is visible in all that we speak, or think, or do, whatever may be the objects of our attention. That a state of things in us, which so materially affects ourselves in our very nature, should have an important influence on our religious interests is to be expected of course. The changes are here wrought in ourselves; and we, the persons thus changed, are those whose religion is concerned. As we are changed, therefore the state of our religion must in a greater or less degree be changed also.

3. The process of sanctification is universal. By this I intend that it affects the whole man: his views, affections, purposes and conduct, and those of every kind. It extends alike to his duties of every kind; toward himself, his fellow-creatures, and his Maker. It affects and improves indiscriminately all the virtues of the Christian character: love to God and to mankind, faith, repentance, justice, truth, kindness, humility, forgiveness, charity, generosity, public spirit, meekness, patience, fortitude, temperance, moderation, candour, and charitableness of judgment. It influences ruling passions and appetites, habits of thought and affection, of language and practice. It prompts to all the acts of piety: to prayer, praise, attendance upon the sanctuary and its ordinances, our sanctification of the Sabbath, Christian communion, and Christian discipline.

4. The progress of sanctification is conspicuous in the life. From the commencement of Christianity in the soul the Christian course is that of a general reformation.

Remarks: 1. The considerations suggested concerning this important religious subject furnish every pro-

fessing Christian with an interesting rule for the examination of his own character. 2. The same considerations furnish abundant encouragement to the Christian. Think how much God has done to accomplish this work, and you can find no room for despondency.—Timothy Dwight.

Complete Sanctification.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thessalonians 5:23.

It may be thought that Paul prayed here for what he was never likely to see; that his ideal of character was altogether too high to be practical. This complete consecration was surely altogether out of the range of these ordinary Thessalonians, who were busy amid the traffic and trade of that great centre of commerce. Paul did not think thus. He did not regard it as at all impossible that men who are fully occupied in ordinary work at home, or in the city, should be sanctified wholly and made blameless unto the coming of the Lord. In fact the New Testament teaching generally goes to show that unless we are being sanctified altogether, we are not being truly sanctified at all. For good Matthew Henry was quite right when he said of true holiness, "It is symmetry of soul"; and surely that is possible to any one who is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

I. We will first remind ourselves that in this remarkable phraseology Paul specifically includes the whole

nature of man as that which should be, and may be, sanctified. Not only here, but elsewhere in Scripture, a man is spoken of as consisting of body, soul, and spirit; and these three are one, the man himself is one in three.

II. What then is this sanctifying? To "sanctify" is to set something apart for a holy purpose, so that it may be regarded as holy, and as being profaned if used for a lower purpose. If you would see what it is to be "sanctified," look to Jesus. 1. His body was sanctified; for all its powers were used in absolute accordance with the will of God. To be sanctified is to be like Him. 2. Again, the soul is to be sanctified. In other words, your mental powers, your capacities of hoping and loving, are all to be sacred. 3. Similarly with the affections. 4. It may seem strange to speak about sanctifying the spirit; for if that be the highest part of man, it would seem to follow that it is essentially holy. But it is not. We need to be cleansed from secret faults and kept back from presumptuous sins.

III. This complete sanctification is a necessity if we would be conformed to the likeness of our Lord. Any part of our nature may become a channel of temptation unless the whole be sanctified.

IV. But whence is it to come? Our text, especially in the original, where emphasis is strong on "God Himself," suggests that it is in Him, not in ourselves, that we have hope.

V. There is a special motive for desiring this hinted at in the text. It is the coming of the Lord Jesus.—A. Rowland.

HEBREWS

Divine Revelation Under the Law and Under the Gospel.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."—Hebrews 1:1-2.

I. *The Matter of the Doctrine.* It was given them by piecemeal, now a part, then a part. They had one part of it in Adam's time, another in Noah's; one in Abraham's, another in Moses' time; one in David's time, another in Jeremiah's, Isaiah's, and the rest of the prophets. It was parcelled out to them as the capacity of the people in sundry times did require; but we have the doctrine of salvation at one lump propounded to us, in one whole and entire sum. Thus God hath dealt more graciously and bountifully with us. They had one flower now and another anon; we have all the flowers in God's garden sweetly smelling all at once in our nostrils. They had now a loaf and then a loaf; now a draught and then a draught of the Lord's wine; the whole magazine of God Almighty is open to us. Then how thankful ought we to be to God above them! And how careful should we be to enrich ourselves with these heavenly wares, that may freely enter the whole storehouse of the Lord of Hosts!

II. *The Manner.* God delivered His will to them after divers manners; to Abraham by angels in the shape of men; to Moses in a bush and a cloud; to Samuel in a dream; to Ezekiel in visions, by the oracles and answers of the priests, in soft wind, etc. To us He hath delivered His will in one manner, by the sweet, comfortable, powerful voice of His own Son. This one manner far surpasses

all the manners whereby God spake to them. Those were dark and obscure, this plain; many of those were terrible to the hearers, this was a most mild and amiable manner.

III. *The Time.* He spake to them of old time, in the first and oldest age of the world; He speaks to us in a new time, wherein all things are made green, fresh and flourishing by our Saviour Christ.

IV. *The Persons* by whom and in whom it was delivered. They were men; Christ, by whom God speaks to us, is God and man; they were wise, could foretell things to come, aptly and pithily interpret the Word of God, yet all their wisdom and knowledge were borrowed; Christ was wise of Himself, clad with His own feathers; they mortal, dust and ashes; Christ never saw corruption, but abideth for ever and ever; they were servants in the House of God; Christ is the Son, yea, the Lord and owner of the house. Therefore wonderfully hath God honoured us in the time of the Gospel above them in the time of the law. If a king should speak to us by one of his privy council, it is much; but if he speak to us by his son and heir apparent to the crown, it is a greater dignity. Many (prophets and kings) have desired to see these things which we see, and have not seen them. God give us grace to use our happiness to His glory and the salvation of us all.—W. Jones.

God's Scheme of Salvation as a Great Harbour.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—Hebrews 2:3.

After a wild night, we have gone down to the harbour, over whose arms

the angry waves have been dashing with boom of thunder and in clouds of spray. Outside the sea has been tossing and churning; cloudwrack driving hurriedly across the sky; the winds howling like the furies of olden fable. But within those glorious walls, the barks which had put in during the night were riding in safety; the sailors resting, or repairing rents in sail and tackle, whilst the waters were unstirred by the storm raging without. Such a refuge or harbour is a fit emblem of salvation, where tempest-driven souls find shelter and peace.

I. It Is Great in Its Sweep.—Sufficient to embrace a ruined world. Room in it for whole navies of souls to ride at anchor. Space enough for every ship of Adam's race launched from the shores of time. "He is the propitiation for the whole world." "Whosoever will." Already it is becoming filled. There a vessel, once manned by seven devils, a pirate ship, but captured by our Emmanuel, and at her stern the name, Mary of Magdala. And here one dismasted, and almost shattered, rescued from the fury of the Maelstrom at the last hour; on her stern the words, The Dying Thief. And there another, long employed in efforts to sap the very walls of the harbour, and now flying a pennon from the masthead, Chief of Sinners and Least of Saints.

II. It Is Great in Its Foundations. The chief requisite in constructing a sea-wall is to get a foundation which can stand unmoved amid the heaviest seas. The shifting sand must be pierced down to the granite rock. But this harbour has foundations mighty enough to inspire strong consolation in those who have fled to it for refuge (Heb. 6: 18). The promise, and as if that were not enough, the oath of God.

III. It Was Great in Its Cost. By the tubular bridge on the Menai Straits stands a column, which re-

cords the names of those who perished during the construction of that great triumph of engineering skill. Nothing is said of the money spent, only of the lives sacrificed. And so, beside the harbour of our salvation, near to its mouth, so as to be read by every ship entering its enclosure, rises another column, with this as its inscription: "Sacred to the memory of the Son of God, Who gave His life a sacrifice for the sin of the world."

IV. It Has Been Great in Its Announcement. The announcement of the law was by angels. The announcement of the Gospel was by the Son. If the one were august, what must not the other have been? If the one were made sure by the most tremendous sanctions, what should not be said of the other? Proclaimed by the Lord; confirmed by apostles and eyewitnesses; testified to by the Almighty Himself, in signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. How dare we treat it with contumely or neglect?

V. It Will Be Great in Its Penalties. The tendency of our age is to minimise God's righteous judgment on sin. It seems to be prevalently thought that, because our dispensation is one of love and mercy, therefore there is the less need to dread the results of sin. But the inspired writer here argues in precisely a contrary sense. Just because this age is one of such tender mercy, therefore sins against its King are more deadly, and the penalties heavier. In the old days no transgression, positive, and no disobedience, negative, escaped its just recompense of reward; and in these days there is even less likelihood.—F. B. Meyer.

Some Reasons Why the Word Became Flesh.

"*For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*"—Hebrews 2: 11.

"Ashamed to call them brethren." Why should He be? It is no condescension to acknowledge the fact of brotherhood with humanity, any more than it is humiliation to be born. But there was a Man who emptied and humbled Himself by being "found in fashion as a man," and for whom it was infinite condescension to call us His brethren. We can say of a prince that he is not ashamed to call his subjects friends, and to sit down to eat with them, but it would be absurd to say so of one of the subjects in reference to his fellows. The full, lofty truth of Hebrews 1, underlies that word "ashamed," which is meaningless unless Jesus was "the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very image of his substance." The writer quotes three Old Testament passages which he regards as prophetic of our Lord's identifying Himself with humanity. These three cited sayings deal with three different aspects of Christ's manhood and of the purpose of His incarnation; and they unitedly give, if not a complete, yet a comprehensive answer to the question, Why did God become Man?

I. *Jesus Is Man That He May Declare God to Men.* All other sources of knowledge of God fail in certainty. They yield only assertions which may or may not be true. At the best, we are relegated to peradventures and theories if we turn away from Jesus Christ. Man said that there was land away across the Atlantic for centuries before Columbus went and brought back its products. He discovers who proves. Christ has not merely spoken to us beautiful and sacred things about God, as saint, philosopher, or poet might do, but He has shown us God; and henceforward, to those who receive Him, the Unknown Root of all being is not a hypothesis, a great Perhaps, a dread or a hope, as the case may be, but the most certain of all facts, of

whom and of whose love we may be surer than we can be of aught besides but our own being.

II. *Jesus Is Man That He May Show to Men the Life of Devout Trust.* Perfect manhood is dependent manhood. A reasonable creature who does not live by faith is a monster arrogating the prerogative of God. Christ's perfect manhood did not release Him from, but bound Him to, the exercise of faith. Nor did His true deity make faith impossible to His manhood. Christ's perfect manhood perfected His faith, and in some aspects modified it. His trust had no relation to the consciousness of sin, and no element either of repentance or of longing for pardon. But it had relation to the consciousness of need, and was in Him, as in us, the condition of continual derivation of life and power from the Father. Christ's perfect faith brought forth perfect fruits in His life, issuing, as it did, in obedience which was perfect in purity of motive, in gladness of submission, and in completeness of the resulting deeds as well as in its continuity through His life. Out of His example we may take both shame and encouragement; shame, when we measure our poor, purblind, feeble, and interrupted faith against His; and encouragement when we raise our hopes to the height of the revelation in it of what ours may become.

III. *Jesus Is Man That He May Bring Men into the Family of Sons of God.*

1. That through Him men may receive a new life which is His own. He can only impart His life on condition of His death. The alabaster box must be broken, though so precious, and though the light of the pure spirit within shone lustrous and softened through it, in order that the house may be filled with the odour of the ointment.

2. That men may, by the com-

munication of His life, become sons of God. They are God's children, being Christ's brethren. They are brought into a new unity, and, being members of one family, are one by a more sacred oneness than the possession of a common humanity.

3. That men may become sharers in His prerogatives and offices. He becomes like us in our lowness and flesh of sin, that we may become like Him in His glory and perfection.

4. That He may present His family at last to God. If we love and trust Him, He will hold us in His strong and tender grasp, and never part from us till He presents us at last, faultless and joyful, before the presence of His and our Father.—A Maclarens.

✓ The Christian and His Redeemer.

"Wherefore, holy brethren."—Hebrews 3:1.

This verse contains a three-fold description:

I. *A Description of True Christians.* Three things concerning Christians are here described:—First: A common character: "Holy." This is the indispensable requisite of a Christian character; the grand common characteristic, the family likeness that distinguishes God's children. Secondly: A common relationship: "Brethren." The Church is a vast and ever-increasing brotherhood. This word is too often a mere cant phrase, but in reality, what word involves more of deep affection and sympathetic love. Thirdly: A common privilege. "Partakers of heavenly calling," i.e., those who have received the Gospel invitation. This is in two senses a "heavenly calling." It is a call from heaven and a call to heaven.

II. *A Description of the Great Redeemer.* He is:—First: The Apostle

of our profession. Christ is the "Sent" from God to us; the Ambassador of the King; the Messenger of the Father. Secondly: The High Priest of our profession. By him we draw near to God, even as by Him God draws near unto us. He pleads with God for us, as He pleads with us for God. Thirdly: The Christ Jesus, i.e., the anointed Deliverer. The writer of this epistle could not have appealed more forcibly to the Jews than in this threefold description of the Messiah, for he virtually says, He is the Moses, i.e., the Apostle, the Aaron, that is, the High Priest, the Joshua, that is, the Jesus of our profession.

III. *The Obligations of True Christians to the Great Redeemer.* "Consider," or, as the word would be better rendered, earnestly consider, attentively ponder, as an object of the highest moment. Men's characters are formed by their thinkings. Meditation is the most constant and influential operation of our nature. Think, meditate upon Jesus Christ. In all sin, sorrow, weariness, discouragement, etc., "Consider," etc., etc.—Urijah Thomas.

The Believer's Assurance.

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."—Hebrews 6:11.

I. *The Parties Addressed.* The apostle was writing to converts from Judaism to Christianity; persons, who by reason of the persecutions to which they were exposed and the strong persuasive efforts of the followers of Jewish customs and laws, were in danger of apostatising from the faith they had embraced.

II. *The Attainment Recommended.* "The full assurance of hope." Paul has referred in his Epistles to three

kinds of assurance. In writing to the Colossians he speaks of the "riches of the full assurance of understanding." In the Epistle from which our text is taken, he exhorts the Hebrew Christians to approach the throne of grace with "full assurance of faith." Whilst in the passage before us he recommends the "full assurance of hope." By the first, he means a clear lively knowledge of Divine truth; by the second an unwavering belief of the Gospel promises; and by the third, a firm conviction of the soul's union to Jesus and adoption into the family of the Most High. Though these three assurances are closely allied, yet each is different from the other. There are two reasons why we may speak of this assurance as a desirable attainment.

I. It will be profitable to ourselves. An old divine well said, "the greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth." The original word here rendered "full assurance" means full lading or full burden. It is a word which may be applied to a ship and her cargo. If, then, we are fully laden with the treasure of assurance, our sails being well filled by the gales of faith and love, we shall steer straight for the harbour of God. Full assurance shall keep us from being all our life, "through fear of death, subject to bondage." We shall not be like the empty vessel tossed to and fro by every wind and wave of doubt. Our full lading shall keep us stable in the sea of life, and we shall at last ride triumphantly into the regions of repose amid the applause of the heavenly host. The

original word is likewise applied to the plenitude of fruit produced by a tree. Say, will it not be better for him to be fully laden with precious fruit, richly decked with luscious clusters, than to have expended all his time and strength in sending out useless tendrils for his support, fearing lest the roots, though firmly grounded, should not be able to sustain him? Depend on it, we shall find assurance a blessing of no mean order. It will make our devotional exercises doubly delightful, because we shall feel that the promises will be fulfilled, and the earnest prayer receive the attention of our Father. Ay, all our engagements shall have a tenfold interest and we shall have a double amount of decision in the discharge of our duties. Our peace shall flow as a river—steadily, evenly, uninterrupted.

2. This full assurance of hope will be pleasurable to God. We all know how pleasant it is to discover that our friends and associates have firm faith in our integrity, truthfulness, love. The Eternal God is pleased with our confidence in Him. He wishes us to believe His Word. He is grieved by our doubts and fears.

III. *The Means of Acquiring This Assurance.* "Show the same diligence unto the end."

1. Watchfulness against all sin is included in showing diligence.

2. Waiting at the feet of God is also included in "diligence." They who have walked in the light of God's countenance and felt the Spirit's clear witness within them have been men of prayer, men, whose closets were oft-frequented spots, men who upon their knees fought their way through ranks of foes. So must it be with us.

3. Perseverance in all religious duties is likewise necessary. We must "give the same diligence unto the end." There must be "a patient continuance in well doing." Our sighing after assurance, to-day, will

avail us little, if to-morrow all desires for the blessing are foreign to our souls, and our hearts are engrossed with earthly matters. Our purpose must be unwavering.—J. H. Hitchens.

The Anchor of the Soul.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast."
—Hebrews 6: 19.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul," etc. Christians have been exhorted to imitate "them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." There are most excellent reasons for their doing so, for God's purposes and promises are most sure. They were not lightly or hastily made; they are most solemnly confirmed; they are "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie"; and they supply the strongest encouragement to the Christian's hopes. Note—

I. *The Object of the Christian's Hope.*—This is not explicitly stated in the text; but it is implied in it, and it may be gathered from the argument of the writer. We may define it as the attainment of his destiny or the perfection of his being. But to mention some particulars: 1. *Freedom from sin and suffering.* The rest which remaineth for the people of God certainly includes deliverance from sin, and from pain of body, and distress of mind, and darkness and sorrow of spirit. We must become free from sin, or our salvation will be neither complete nor true; for sin would mar the fairest realms, and fill them with discord and misery. 2. *Attainment of spiritual perfection.* "Let us press on unto perfection." We hope for more clear, more correct, more comprehensive knowledge; for purity of heart which will be perfect in its kind, though not in its de-

gree; for love which shall be perfect in like manner; and for harmony between our purposes and performances, our willing and doing. We are inspired by the sublime hope of becoming like unto our Lord and Saviour (1 John 3:2, 3). 3. *Enjoyment of heavenly blessedness.* Through Christ God will bring "many sons unto glory." Jesus has entered heaven as our Forerunner, and we hope to follow Him thither. We are "looking for the blessed hope," etc. (Titus 2:13. "God hath begotten us again unto a living hope," etc. (1 Pet. 1: 3-5). This glorious hope is "set before us" as a prize to be won; it is "set before us" to animate our spirits, to strengthen our hands in Christian work, and to quicken our feet in the Christian race. Contrast this with any inferior object of hope; e.g., worldly possessions, worldly pleasures, worldly honours. These do not satisfy; that does. These degrade the soul; that exalts it. These will fail those who have attained and cherished them; that will lead to splendid and perpetual fulfilment.

II. *The Influence of the Christian's Hope.*—"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil." This hope is the stay of the soul amid a tumultuous world. It is clearly implied: 1. *That the voyage of life is marked by storms.* These storms are occasioned by bodily afflictions, temporal anxieties and losses, family trials, domestic and social bereavements, and spiritual conflicts. 2. *That these storms try and imperil the soul.* There is danger of striking upon the hidden rock of some subtle and insidious sin, of being driven by the wild winds of passion against stern and stony cliffs, or of being hurried helplessly onward by fierce storms of sorrow. The dangers in navigating the sea of life are numerous and various. Many a noble soul has reached the

desired haven sore damaged in life's storms, while some, alas! have "made shipwreck concerning the faith." 3. *That the Christian's hope, as an anchor, will enable him safely to out-ride the storms.* "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast," etc. Ebrard's note seems to us both true and beautiful: "Two figures are here, not so much mixed as, in a very elegant manner, combined. The author might compare the world to a sea, the soul to a ship, the future still concealed glory to the covered bottom of the sea, the remote firm land stretching beneath the water and covered by the water. Or he might compare the present life upon earth to the fore-court, and the future blessedness to the heavenly sanctuary, which is still, as it were, concealed from us by a veil. He has, however, combined the two figures. The soul, like a ship-wrecked mariner, clings to an anchor, and sees not where the cable of the anchor runs to, where it is made fast; it knows, however, that it is firmly fixed behind the veil which conceals from it the future glory, and that if it only keeps fast hold of the anchor, it will, in due time, be drawn in with the anchor by a rescuing hand into the holiest of all." This hope enables the Christian in deep distress to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" And in wildest storms it inspires him to sing, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble," etc. (Ps. 46:1-3, 7).

And thus "we are saved by hope."

III. The Assured Realisation of the Christian's Hope.—Two things assure us of the fulfilment of our hope. 1. The character of the anchor and the anchorage. The anchor

is "both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil" (Rom. 5:1-5; 2 Thess. 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:1). 2. *The presence of Jesus as our Forerunner in heaven.* "Within the veil, whither as Forerunner on our behalf Jesus entered." The veil spoken of is that which divided the holy of holies from the holy place. "Within the veil" is a figurative expression for heaven. The presence of the Son of man in heaven is a guarantee of the realisation of the hope of every believer in Him. He entered heaven as our Representative, and "as a Forerunner on our behalf." "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you," etc. Mark, then, the absolute necessity of vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. One with Him by faith here, we shall be one with Him in blessedness hereafter. "Christ in you, the Hope of glory . . . Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory."—W. Jones.

Christian Hope.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul."—Hebrews 6:19.

I. What Is Its Object? On what is this hope supremely fixed? "Upon that which is within the veil." Yes, it is attracted by the glory which is afterwards to be revealed by the fulness of grace, which is to come unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which "eye hath not seen," but which will burst upon our enraptured souls when we awake up in the Divine likeness at the resurrection morn. Oh, what a sublime anticipation!—The perfection of the soul in happiness, which in this world is

so limited and interrupted—the perfection of the soul in purity, which is now only attained in part, because “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and we cannot do the things that we would”—the perfection of the soul in knowledge, which here is so contracted, intercepted, acquired with so much difficulty, and so soon forgotten by the weakness of memory and the infirmities of age—the perfection of the soul in holy love, which on earth is so faint, cold, and weak—the unveiled vision of God and the Lamb—intimate and everlasting communion with the Great Jehovah. Again, we say, what a sublime anticipation! How elevating—how expanding—how purifying—how cheering—how attractive! Compare it with the hope of the worldling, whose portion is only in this life, and consists of houses and lands, silver and gold, titles and emoluments—compare it with the hope of the sensualist, who fares sumptuously every day, and cries, “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed,” whilst his soul is unfed by the bread of life, untaught by the Spirit of God. Compare it with the hope of the ambitious, whose great object is to rise upon the scale of popularity.

II. What Is Your Authority for Cherishing This Pleasing Anticipation? On what does your hope rest? Not upon your own merits, however amiable your temper, moral your conduct, charitable your actions, and just and uniform your dealings; nor is it founded upon the mercy of God unconnected with the doctrine of the Atonement, and the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. The believer's hope rests exclusively and entirely, as you will find in the context, upon “the two immutable things,” the oath and promise of God relating to the sufferings and death of His beloved Son, as the only sacrifice for sin, and

the strong consolation which is derivable from a humble dependence upon His merits and love.

1. The word and covenant of God are the charter of our hopes, which we are permitted to plead, saying, “Remember thy word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope”; recollecting that “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.”

2. The finished work of Christ is the support and security of our hope; “as the law made nothing perfect, it was merely a shadow of good things to come, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God.”

3. Our union with the Saviour, and the renewal of our soul by the converting grace of the Holy Ghost, are the evidence and the sanction of our hope, as “Christ is in us the hope of glory,” and, by the witnessing of the Spirit, “we know what is the hope of our calling,” and enjoy “the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

III. The Benefits Which Result from This Desirable State of Mind. “It is like an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Here a state of trial and exposure is implied. The soul, by this nautical phraseology, is compared to a vessel floating upon the uncertain and perpetually-changing surface of the ocean, where an anchor is indispensable to its safety. On what does the hope of a newly-awakened sinner rest? On what is the anchor of a believing penitent cast?

1. On the free mercy of the blessed God “who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.”

2. It rests upon the efficacy of the Saviour's blood, which is unto all and upon all them that believe; which is the price of our redemption—the

purchase of our acceptance—the ratification of our peace, and the balm of our consolation.

3. The invitations of the Gospel are also the sanction of a penitent sinner's hope. These are the warblings of mercy's trumpet, the proclamation of redeeming love.

4. Nor can we omit to notice the encouragement which the pleasing change produced in the sinner's mind affords to the energies of evangelical hope. Thus assured of his safety, he spreads his sails—launches forth and speeds his way towards the promised land, the better country, favoured with the superintendence of the Saviour as his pilot, the Word of God as his chart and his compass, and hope as his anchor. At length after many a storm and struggle, the believer reaches the peaceful port of everlasting bliss. Then, again, his hope, as an anchor to the soul, is most valuable. He is now waiting for the signal to disembark and to land upon the better country. He therefore resembles Paul, who, having "fought a good fight," finished his course and kept the faith, said, "I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand." "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep," etc.

IV. The Importance of This Hope.

1. This will appear if you reflect on the insufficiency of all things here below to satisfy the immortal soul and render it happy.

2. Your peace and comfort depend in a great degree upon the possession of an evangelical hope.

3. The possession of the blessing in question is indispensable from the uncertainty of life, only during the limited span of which can the hope of glory be obtained.

4. And, finally, the satisfaction and comfort of your friends who may survive you are involved in your possessing a good hope.—W. B. Leach.

Our Lord's Sacrifice.

"But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."—Hebrews 9: 11, 12.

I. *The Idea of Sacrifice Is Almost Co-extensive with the Idea of God.* The universality of the sacrificial idea can only be accounted for either by some primeval revelation from God, or by the fact that God, who endowed man with the religious instinct, implanted in him the notion of sacrifice.

Before the Fall, when man's conscience was unclouded by sin, sacrifice was the expression of love alone. Now that man's heart is stained by sin, sacrifice is the expression of penitence, and yet still of love; for all true penitence is the utterance of love, telling God of sorrow, not for what the penitent has lost, not for the punishment incurred, but of that sorrow which is the expression of love in the presence of sin.

Sacrifice consists of an inward and an outward part, of which, while the inward may be the more important, the outward is absolutely necessary to perfect the sacrifice. True sacrifices are those inward feelings of love and obedience which form the very foundation of religion; but those feelings are not in themselves proper sacrifices; in order that they may become so, they must find some external means of expression. A true sacrifice is one in which the religion of the heart is expressed by some outward symbol or rite acceptable to God.

In our Lord Jesus Christ the inward part was present from the first moment of His incarnate life. It was

the life of perfect love and unwavering obedience, which, as the inward part, found its outward expression in the death upon the cross, and made our Lord's a proper sacrifice—"a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

II. In the Epistle to the Hebrews Our Lord's Sacrifice Upon the Cross Is Compared with the Sacrifices Under the Jewish Law. Let us observe how perfectly our Lord fulfilled the sacrificial types, and where His sacrifice differs both from the Jewish sacrifices and the ritual of the Day of Atonement.

1. There was the presentation of the victim by the offerer. Two points here demand attention: the offering was to be without blemish, and it was to be a voluntary offering. It was, then, a voluntary offering; and the act of presentation may be referred either to our Lord's high-priestly prayer, or to that prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane; or we may consider both these actions to belong to the presentation of the victim.

2. The second stage in the offering of the Jewish sacrifice was the identification of the victim with the offerer. By this action the offerer expressed his desire that the offering should be accepted in his place. The victim, however, was only a symbolic substitute for the offerer; but our Lord was, in the truest sense, representative of the human race. The sacrificial offering offered by Christ is a real and equivalent substitute for all mankind, on whose behalf it is sacrificed.

3. Then came the effusion of the blood. The offerer himself slew the victim. The priest took the blood and sprinkled it. The blood of each sin-offering was sprinkled against the veil, and symbolised the separation which sin had caused between God and man—that there was no free ac-

cess to God. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, and so the blood was sprinkled, but the veil remained unmoved. The precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin, so when it was sprinkled the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, signifying that the barrier between God and man was removed, and access to God secured through the precious Blood of Christ.

4. There was the burning upon the altar of certain parts of the victim, which thus went up as a sweet savour to God. And so our Lord.

5. There was a feast upon the sacrifice, and this is fulfilled by our Lord's gift of His Holy Body and Blood to be our food in the Eucharist. There we feast upon the Christian sacrifice.

III. Holy Scripture Teaches Us to Associate the Idea of Life with the Blood, and Therefore Forbade the Jews Ever to Eat Blood. So that, as all sacrifice pointed to our Lord's sacrifice, this injunction pointed to the fact that it was the precious Blood which was to make atonement for sin, which was to redeem the world.

By this inauguration of the new dispensation, a new and living way is opened to the Throne of God, opened by the precious Blood. From that Blood each baptism gains its efficacy, from it each absolution derives its power; the precious Blood of Christ—the means of redemption, applied to our souls through the Sacraments of the Church.—A. G. Mortimer.

Spiritual Blood-shedding.

"And without shedding of blood is no remission."—Hebrews 9:22.

In this sentence the Apostle expresses the necessity of animal blood-shedding in the ceremonial cleansings of the Mosaic Dispensation. In the previous clause he says, "Almost all

things are by the law purged with blood." "Almost," not all. The exceptions may be found in Exodus 19:10; Lev. 15:5, 16:26, 22:6. As a rule blood-shedding was indispensable for all ceremonial cleansing and consecration. Into the reason of this Biblical students have inquired and have reached widely different results. From an inquiry into it here we are restricted both by our purpose and our space. Now, although the Apostle utters the text in order to express a fact in connection with a system which has long since passed away, we shall employ it to express the necessary condition of soul deliverance from sin. The shedding of blood means shedding of life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." It means, in other words, self-sacrifice. Christ says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you." What does He mean? He means this, unless you take my moral life into you—my self-sacrificing spirit—you cannot live.

I. *This Spiritual Blood-Shedding or Self-Sacrifice Is Essential to Deliver Our Own Souls from Sin.* Sin is the great curse of humanity; deliverance from it is the great want. But there is no deliverance from it but by self-sacrificing efforts. No corrupt lust can be killed, no wicked habit overcome, no fettering chain snapped, no soul-tyrant crushed, without this blood-shedding. The shedding of blood involves two ideas. First: The losing of life. "The life is in the blood." Every drop falling is so much life gone. The life of the sinner is the life of carnality, worldliness, selfishness. Every self-denying act is the losing of this, is the shedding of its blood, and the more of this blood-shedding the better for the soul. Bleed on, for he that loseth his sinful life shall find a higher. He that is crucified with Christ shall live. Secondly: The feel-

ing of pain. The shedding of blood gives the idea of pain, and there is much pain connected with the efforts of the self-denying soul to deliver itself from sin. It is spoken of as an amputation, a mortification, a resisting unto blood, an agonising, a crucifixion. But there is a high pleasure connected with the pain; heaven pours its joys into the soul as the carnal self is bleeding to death.

II. *This Spiritual Blood-Shedding or Self-Sacrifice Is Essential To Deliver the Souls of Others from Sin.* Three things show this. First: The necessary qualification of a spiritual reformer. The one instrument by which man can deliver the souls of his brother men from sin is the Gospel. But to use the Gospel, he must 1. understand it, and he cannot understand it without a self-sacrificing spirit. To use it successfully he 2. must speak it with a living force, but he cannot do this without a self-sacrificing spirit. To use it with success 3. his labours must be blest of God, and God will not bless his labours without this self-sacrificing spirit. Secondly: The spirit which has governed all genuine reformers. Moses was a reformer, and his life was a life of spiritual blood-shedding. "Blot my name out of the book," etc. Isaiah was a reformer, and when prostrate in the dust we hear him exclaim, "Here am I, send me." Jeremiah was a reformer, his public life was a life of blood-shedding. "O that my eyes were fountains of water," etc. Paul was a genuine reformer, and was not his life a life of self-sacrifice? "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," etc. Thirdly: The power of Christ in prosecuting His mission. The grand object of Christ's mission to this world was to "destroy the works of the devil," to "put away sin." But what was the spirit in which He did His work? Self-

sacrifice. "He loved us and gave himself for us." He gave Himself, shed His own blood, for He knew that, "without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins." His self-sacrificing spirit in the Gospel is at once the power to redeem souls from sin and to reconcile souls to God. This is indeed the power of God unto salvation. Christ's self-sacrifice was in some respects unique. It was not to deliver His own soul from sin, for He had none, but the souls of others. His power is in His Cross.

Conclusion: The text, then, has a universal application. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Deliverance from sin, the urgent necessity of humanity, is not an easy work. Every successful effort involves blood-shedding. All efforts apart from self-denial must prove utterly and for ever fruitless. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Brothers, embody this principle in your every effort, and ring this thought into the souls of men.—The Homilist.

The Necessity of Atonement.

"*Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.*"—Hebrews 9:22.

Atonement always supposes a party offending and a party offended. It supposes that the offended holds the offender justly bound to suffer penal consequences as merited by the offence. The question proposed for present discussion regards the necessity of the atonement of Jesus Christ, in order to God's remitting the sins of men. As a preliminary, we are constrained to protest against the adducing of any facts as bearing upon this question, which belong to the present gracious methods of God's

dealing with the human race. The question is whether, in order to the adoption of those gracious methods, an atonement was not necessary? The evangelical doctrine of atonement is founded in the independent, essential mercy of God. It originated in His infinite mercy. It was an expedient, devised by boundless wisdom, and furnished by boundless love, to supersede the rigorous execution of justice. The forgiveness of sin essentially depends on the whole character of God, on His moral views and feelings respecting sin, and on the reasons which render its punishment necessary. It is here that we should look for all the obstacles, if there be any, which obstruct the exercise of grace, and oppose the remission of sin, and for all the reasons which render an atonement in behalf of sinful men, with a view to their receiving that blessed benefit, indispensable. Here, then, let us commence the discussion. The doctrine which I propose to illustrate and establish is contained in the following proposition: The great moral reasons which require the punishment of sin render the atonement necessary in order to its forgiveness.

I. I Am to Show That There Are Great Moral Reasons Which Require That Sin Should Be Punished.

1. God's holiness and justice form the first moral reason. This is the "ground pillar and chief buttress" of my argument. If He is a holy and righteous God, it is impossible that sin should pass unpunished. You ask me what is God's holiness; what is His rectitude? His holiness is an essential part of His eternal character. It is His immutable disposition toward all points that involve morality. I would say it is His most perfect perception of right and wrong; it is His most perfect approbation of right; it is His most perfect abhorrence of wrong. And His justice is also inherent and essential. It is the

disposition of His nature to act, in all worlds, on all occasions, in the most exact conformity to His moral sense. In heaven, earth, or hell, no being shall ever have ground of complaint, that in His treatment of him, God has forgotten His own holiness and justice.

2. I proceed to state a second moral reason, intimately connected with the preceding, why sin should not be permitted to pass unpunished. It is necessary, as the means of leading intelligent beings to reverence and honour God as a Being essentially holy and righteous. We contend that even the benevolence of God demands that sin should not be permitted to pass unpunished. To Him the created universe looks up as the Parent of eternal holiness, order, and well being. These are to be found and enjoyed only in subjection to God, and in perfect, undeviating obedience to His laws. That He should enforce such subjection and obedience by holding the transgressor responsible for his misdeeds, and so administering His government as that sin shall not pass unpunished, is required by the best interests of the created system.

II. These Moral Reasons Which Require the Punishment of Sin, Render the Atonement Necessary in Order to Its Forgiveness. No substantial reason can be given why a Being infinitely benevolent as well as just, who has been pleased to ordain the redemption of guilty men, should not, when the ends of justice are satisfied, remit their doom. And these ends are most fully secured in the atonement. With an efficacy which to that heart which contemplates it in its just light must prove irresistible, the atonement exhibits God as a Being infinitely holy and righteous, regarding Himself as supremely worthy of the entire homage, love and obedience of all moral existences, whose rectitude

is such that He can give no other laws than those which are founded in eternal and immutable right, can administer no other government but that which is conducted on principles of justice and judgment, can hold no communion with rational beings who are unholy, cannot mark sin but to abhor it, and as the Sovereign Ruler, to manifest towards it His abhorrence, cannot pardon it without hearing testimony, heard with astonishment by heaven, earth, and hell, that it is an endless evil. And what inducement does the atonement hold out to moral agents to esteem, admire, adore, and obey the Most High and Holy God, and to persevere in this exalted and exalting course? As the attainment of a supreme regard for holiness and an entire detestation of sin must produce the most pure and enduring happiness, what measure could so directly and so powerfully tend to promote and extend the highest happiness of the created system as the atonement?—John DeWitt.

Saving Faith.

“Believe to the saving of the soul.”
—Hebrews 10:39.

I. The Nature of Faith.

1. Belief in another's testimony. We go to places, and attend meetings; we write letters, and maintain intercourse with others; we transact business, and conduct our affairs; we sail for foreign ports; we do ten thousand things, trivial or important, simply on the testimony of others, because we believe in them and what they say.

2. Belief in God's testimony. His testimony is contained in the Scriptures. In them He reveals His nature, perfections, government and laws; His relations and designs towards us; judgment to come, and future states of being; things unseen and eternal. We accept the testi-

mony—that it is from Him, and, consequently, that what it declares and unfolds, promises and threatens, is true and real. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater."

3. Belief in God's testimony concerning the Redeemer. He has testified that Jesus Christ is His eternal, only-begotten, well-beloved Son, one with Him in nature and operation; that "in the fulness of the time" He was born of a woman, became partaker of flesh and blood, and was made in our likeness," etc. We believe the testimony concerning Jesus Christ, because He who testifies cannot deceive.

4. Trust in Christ as our Saviour. Believing the testimony God has given us concerning His Son, concerning His Divine person and mediatorial office—that He came "to seek and to save the lost"—we cast ourselves unreservedly and wholly on Him; we confidently give up ourselves to Him; we trust in Him.

II. *The Origin of Faith.*

1. It is of God. The Godhead is the fountain of all blessings, the primary cause of all gracious effects. We have neither the inclination nor the ability to believe unto salvation. The desire and strength must be granted. If we have a true apprehension of our demerit and exposure to perdition, and are disposed to flee to Christ; and if we have a full persuasion of His sufficiency to save, and are able to cast ourselves on Him, it is of Divine favour and operation.

2. God produces faith by the Holy Spirit. Convicted, illumined and made willing by the power of the Holy Ghost, we realise our sinfulness, our awful danger; we see Christ in the beauty and excellency of His Divine person, and in the suitableness and sufficiency of His atoning work; and we surrender every other ground of hope, and rest altogether and only on Him for salvation.

III. *The Instrument or Means by Which Faith is Produced and Maintained.* "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

IV. *The Degree of Faith.* The rock on which saved sinners stand is equally stable to all, but the foothold of all is not equally firm. Faith may decline; how far it would be difficult to determine. Even the believer, in a time of desertion and darkness, may question his interest in Christ, and fear coming short of heaven. On the other hand, faith is sometimes strong.

V. *The Effects and Evidences of Faith.*

1. It imparts peace. The storm is changed into a calm. The dark night is past and morning dawns. The fever, the agony, is over. And in proportion as faith is maintained, so is peace. If faith languish, and be temporarily interrupted, distress of soul returns; if it flourish, and be strong and vigorous, tranquillity continues.

2. It produces holiness. "The operation of God," its tendency to godliness, A holy principle, it produces holy practice; good seed, it yields good fruit; a pure spring, pure streams flow from it; a latent power, it manifests itself in godly deeds.

3. It purifies the heart. A believing sight of Christ crucified, imparted by the Holy Ghost, reveals the terrible evil of sin, and fills us with repugnance of it. Faith in vigorous exercise, we cannot but loathe sin. The heart purified, sanctified, "holiness to the Lord" shall be inscribed on all pertaining to us.

4. In producing holiness, faith works by love. Believing in Jesus Christ, we are assimilated, though very imperfectly, to His human disposition and conduct. How attractive and effective are words and deeds of love! Faith and love are beautiful graces and potent factors.

5. It overcomes the world.—Alex. McCreery.

Saving Faith.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Hebrews 11:1.

There were those who one time asked the Saviour, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" To this He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The issue, then, between God and men is narrowed down to this—"only believe."

I. *The Meaning of the Term.*

1. Sometimes the word refers merely to a creed, with no notion in it of spiritual experience at all (1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 3).

2. When the Bible speaks of faith, it sometimes means mere belief in facts (ver. 3). This kind of faith is necessary, in a certain sense, to salvation: "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The facts of the Saviour's life are to be received in that way. But this is not saving faith at all.

3. Again: faith sometimes means that conviction of the understanding which results from proofs laid before it or arguments adduced. This is that which the woman wrought among her neighbours when she came back from the conversation with Jesus at Jacob's well. This also is the faith which Thomas had when asked to put his hand in the side of his Lord. But this is not saving faith; for our Lord immediately added, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

4. And sometimes the Bible means the faith of miracles. This was a peculiar gift, bestowed by Christ upon His immediate followers. Now, whatever was the nature of this peculiar endowment, it is evident enough that there was no grace in it to save the

soul; for the Saviour Himself declared (Matt. 7:22, 23).

5. Then, lastly, the Bible means saving faith; the true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, through which we are justified, and by which we live.

II. *The Nature of This Exercise.* The old writers used to say that faith was composed of three elements: a right apprehension, a cordial assent, and an unwavering trust. Let me seek to exhibit these in turn in a very familiar way.

1. To apprehend is really a physical act, and means to seize hold of. When applied to mental operation, it signifies to conceive clearly any given object, and hold it before the mind for examination and use. It does not always include a full comprehension. A drowning man may catch a rope that hangs near him, and be rescued by it, without knowing who threw it to him, or who will draw it in, or what vessel it trails from. He apprehends it, but he does not comprehend it. He sees it, but he does not see all with which it is connected. The two essential things for every man to apprehend are his own need and Jesus Christ's fitness to supply it. There is the inward look, and then there is the outward look. I cannot help myself, and the Saviour can help me are the two thoughts that must lie buried deep in his soul. It matters little how these things are learned.

2. Then comes the second element of faith, already mentioned—namely, assent. This is a step in advance of the other. A simple illustration will make plain what is meant by it. An invalid is sometimes very unwilling to admit his danger, even when he has nothing to oppose to the reasoning of one who proves it. He feels his weakness, but he resorts to a thousand subterfuges to avoid yielding to the physician. His judgment is convinced, but his will is unbroken. He apprehends his danger, and knows the remedy; but he refuses to be helped

What he needs now is assent; and this requires humility and the renunciation of self-will. Faith includes this. It calls for a cheerful submission to God's requirements, the moment we apprehend them, no matter how humiliating the assertion of our ill-desert may be.

3. The third element of saving faith is trust. By this I mean reliance on the truth of what God said He would do; a quiet resting on His promises to accomplish all we need for salvation.

III. The Use To Be Made of This Analysis Comes Next to View. Your experience hitherto has been something like this. You have seen your need; you have gone in prayer to Jesus confessing it. You said in your prayer, "O Lord, I am vile, I come to Thee; I plead Thy promise that Thou wilt not cast me out; I give myself away in an everlasting surrender; I leave my soul at the very foot of the Cross!" And then you rose from your knees, murmuring, "Oh, I am no better; I feel just the same as before!" You saw that you had made a failure. Now, what was the lack? Simply in the particular of trust. You would not take Jesus at His word. When you have given yourself to Christ, leave yourself there, and go about your work as a child in His household. When He has undertaken your salvation, rest assured He will accomplish it, without any of your anxiety, or any of your help. There remains enough for you to do, with no concern for this part of the labour. Let me illustrate this posture of mind as well as I can. A shipmaster was once out for three nights in a storm; close by the harbour, he yet dared not attempt to go in, and the sea was too rough for the pilot to come aboard. Afraid to trust the less experienced sailors, he himself stood firmly at the helm. Human endurance almost gave way before the unwonted strain. Worn with toil,

beating about; worn yet more with anxiety for his crew and cargo; he was well-nigh relinquishing the wheel, and letting all go awreck, when he saw the little boat coming with the pilot. At once that hardy sailor sprang on the deck, and with scarcely a word took the helm in his hand. The captain went immediately below, for food and for rest; and especially for comfort to the passengers, who were weary with apprehension. Plainly now his duty was in the cabin; the pilot would care for the ship. Where had his burden gone? The master's heart was as light as a schoolboy's; he felt no pressure. The pilot, too, seemed perfectly unconcerned; he had no distress. The great load of anxiety had gone for ever; fallen in some way or other between them. Now turn this figure. We are anxious to save our soul, and are beginning to feel more and more certain that we cannot save it. Then comes Jesus, and undertakes to save it for us. We see how willing He is; we know how able He is; there we leave it. We let Him do it. We rest on His promise to do it. We just put that work in His hands to do all alone; and we go about doing something else; self-improvement, comfort to others, doing good of every sort.—C. S. Robinson.

Emancipation from the Fear of Death.

"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
—Hebrews 11:14, 15.

Death is a subject which may at present be remote from our thoughts, but it is an experience in which we shall all one day or other be interested. To be frequently in the con-

temptation of death is perhaps the maker of a feeble rather than of a robust spirit, yet we ought not to refuse the calls which in God's providence invite us to consider death. And, if it be extravagant to demand that a large part of our life should be consumed in contemplating its end, we may, like Nelson, while fighting on deck yet keep our coffin in our cabin.

It is well to be assured that one of the purposes served by the mission of Christ was to dispel the fear of death by destroying that which gave it power to terrify. The fear of death is here represented as a bondage, a condition of slavery out of which every child of God must be emancipated.

I. If We Analyse This Fear We Find That There Are Various Causes Producing It. First of all there is the bodily pain, which frequently precedes death, and may in our own case do so. Dread of pain increases with age, as we learn more of the capacity for suffering which our body possesses, and as we see more of the terrible forms of disease by which life is slowly worn out. It is human nature to shrink from long-continued and hopeless weakness, from months of uselessness and slow decay, from the gradual extinction of all the functions of life, and the constantly renewed misery of the medical or surgical appliances which we know can but prolong for a short time a life that has become torture. But this cause of fear may be left to be dealt with by common sense and nature. For it is unreasonable to distress ourselves with prospects of such a kind. For all we know, death may find us in sleep or may have passed before we were conscious of its approach, or in our case it may come with none of these attendant horrors. Dr. Hunter, in his last moments, grieved that he "could not write how easy and delightful it is to die." The late Archbishop of Canterbury quietly re-

marked, "It is really nothing much after all."

II. A Second Cause of This Fear Is a More Reasonable One. We fear death because it brings to an end the only life we know experimentally.

But if we believe what both nature and Christ teach us, that this life is but the training-ground for another, that the powers here cultivated and the tools here whetted are for use in a larger and intenser existence; if we consider that once this life was as strange and new to us as any other can be, and that death is really the bursting of the shell that hinders us from entering the ampler air of our true and eternal life, we have surely cause enough to throw such regrets and fears to the winds, and even long, as some have longed, to learn what the true life of God and God's children is.

III. But This Leads Us to the Most Fruitful Cause of Fear, the Consciousness That After Death Comes the Judgment. Whatever men hold regarding the last judgment or the mode of it, all men feel that at death there is a judgment, that death ushers them into a fixed, final, eternal state. This is the instinctive apprehension of untaught men as well as the warning of revelation.

The natural boldness which confronts death cheerfully, or sullenly submits to the inevitable, disappears when this added knowledge of the significance of death enters in. Mere natural courage is irrelevant in facing judgment. This letter was written "to the Hebrews," to men who had lived under a legal religion, and who could expect to escape punishment only if they had complied with all that the law commanded. But to be sure of this was impossible, and the result was that we find them exclaiming, "In this life death never suffers a man to be glad."

Our emancipation from bondage to this fear is accomplished by "the de-

struction of him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil was considered to be the counsel for the prosecution, the embodiment of an accusing conscience. Death was looked upon as the result of the primal curse, as separation from God and from all good on account of sin; a just and true view. The devil had the power of death in the sense in which the state has the power of the sword to inflict punishment on evil-doers. The devil used the common idea of death to terrify and appal and separate from all hope in God. The Jew was haunted with such visions as Zechariah had when he saw the high priest himself clothed in filthy garments. This was the sting of the serpent; but in Christ the primeval promise was fulfilled, the serpent's head was crushed. The devil's weapon is struck from his hand. He can no longer persuade the children of God that death means separation from God and entrance upon a life of suffering.—Marcus Dods.

God's Care of His Church.

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."—Hebrews 11:29.

What a standing record is here of God's care of His Church! Does the flood come upon them? Then He will build an ark for them. Have they to go through a wilderness? He will make the wilderness a place of safety and comfort. Are they in want of bread? They shall have manna. Do they come to the Red Sea? He will smite the tongue of the Red Sea. Nothing shall hinder Him from watching over the people, who are dear to Him as the apple of His eye.

I. *God Leads His People From Time to Time into Straits from Which No Power of Man Can Extricate Them.*

The Word of God declares it, and there are but few of God's saints but have the testimony of it in their own hearts, and all sooner or later shall. Sometimes this is seen in providential difficulties: the Lord brings them into them. True it is that they are sometimes the means of bringing themselves into straits: but then still the Lord is with them. And we see this, too, in spiritual things. He does bring His people to be tried in a way that they had no conception of. Thus the young convert frequently cometh, with his low looks, in great sorrow, wondering whether it is possible for one to be a child of God, and to be assaulted as he is by the powers of darkness. He thought all should be smooth before him: he thought all should be plain under his feet. Perhaps he saw so much in Jesus as made him begin his way happy in God; he thought his enemies were all dead upon the sea-shore. And instead he finds himself let and hindered in prayer. But all these things are of an indispensable necessity: I do not learn what worldliness is by seeing it in my brother, but I learn what it is by seeing it in my own soul; I must know an evil before I can loathe it. And therefore be assured, you that are learning out some of these lessons, painful to your nature, humiliating to your pride, yet be assured of this, we never can know the worth of Jesus but as we try, and never can we know what there is in God but as the creature sinks, and is brought down to his right place before Him. This is God's mercy, this is God's wisdom, this is God's goodness, this is God's faithfulness, that He brings His people from time to time into such straits as no power on earth but Himself can extricate them from.

II. *But Observe Now That the Lord Delivers Them.* And if you ask why He delivers them, it is because He loves them. But for whose sake

is it that He loveth His covenant people? Is it for Abraham's sake? No; it is for His Son's sake: "even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." It is for His own name's sake, and because He had compassion on them, and chose them, and redeemed them, that in time He preserves them: and as long as that blessed Intercessor standeth up at the right hand of God, with your names upon His heart, as long as His great work goeth up with its much incense moment by moment, be assured of this, it is as much possible for God not to remember His covenant, as it is impossible for God to deny Himself.

III. *But Observe, Now, the Way and the Means by Which the Lord Delivered in This Case.* It was a way through the Red Sea, typical of Jesus, the way through the Red Sea, to Canaan, and that Red Sea typical of the vials of God's wrath, the trials and temptations of the way, the floods of evil by which we are surrounded in this poor dying world; and yet Jesus is the way to the land of Canaan, by which all the Israel of God shall pass, and not one shall perish. Is it not a wondrous way to see an incarnate God standing in the breach? Is it not a wondrous way to see Jesus by His own blood opening a way for His ransomed to pass over, yea, bringing life and immortality to light in His own death? See what it has cost: the blood of God's own Son. See what your sins deserved. See what God's love was. See what Jesus is. And remark, too, that these very waters, that seemed in themselves as if they must destroy, became a wall on the right hand and on the left, became, as it were, a supporter. Oh, is it not a truth to die upon, when a man turning upon his pillow is enabled to look up and rest in Jesus, the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God, to see the debt completely paid? Do you think anything like this can

bear up a dying bed? And now consider the means. It was by faith. Faith, resting upon the promise, went into the sea; presumption, without a promise, rushed into the sea; faith was safe; presumption was destroyed. Here was faith, with its meek look, resting upon the promise going forward. So it is with you, casting yourselves, in your feebleness, in your beggary, in your vileness, simply upon God's promise of life in Christ Jesus to every soul that believeth. Now, as faith enters into the mighty waters, it can see righteousness and peace all in glorious perfection. It can stand up, in the midst of providences, and say, not a drop of wrath is here. Mighty faith! O Lord, increase our faith.—J. H. Evans.

Divine Discipline.

"*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord.*"—Hebrews 12:5.

Our subject is Divine discipline. Let us notice—

I. *Its Character.*—Three words are used to express it—"rebuke," "chastening," "scourging." The last two seem to be used synonymously here. Archbishop Trench points out that "to rebuke" and "to chaste" are often found together, but they are very capable of being distinguished. 'To rebuke' is so to rebuke that the person is brought to the acknowledgment of his fault—is *convinced*, as David was when rebuked by Nathan." The word translated to "chaste," "being in classical Greek to instruct, to educate, is in sacred Greek to instruct or educate by means of correction, through the severe discipline of love." The object of the discipline is to deliver the subjects of it from sin, to establish them in the faith, and to perfect them in holiness. The means of the discipline are afflictions, persecutions, and trials. And it may

be administered by the enemies of the Church of Christ. The persecutions of man may be the discipline of God. "Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sins of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession."

II. Its Author.—"The chastening of the Lord . . . Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Some of our trials are from His hand. He is the great Husbandman, and He prunes the vines that they may bring forth more fruit. The trials which are not sent by Him are permitted by Him (Job 1:12; 2:6; 2 Cor. 12:7). And He gives to all our trials their disciplinary character. He makes the bitter potion medicinal. By His blessing our sufferings become salutary, and our sorest afflictions our sagest instructors. The fact that the Lord is the Author of our discipline, that our trials either proceed from Him or are permitted and regulated by Him, supplies a guarantee that we shall not be tried beyond our strength. He is infinite in wisdom and in love. "He knoweth our frame"; and He will either restrict our trials so that they exceed not our strength or increase our strength until it surpasses the severity of our trials. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." "I will correct thee in measure." "Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies." "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

III. Its Subjects.—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." 1. *They are filially related to Him.* "Every son" of His He subjects to reproof and chastisement.

"God has one Son without sin, but none without suffering." If we are His sons, we may rest assured that He will not fail to secure to us the discipline that we need. Thus our sufferings may be an evidence of our sonship. 2. *They are beloved by Him.* "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Because He loves us He corrects us. It has been well said, that "lawns which we would keep in the best condition are very frequently mown; the grass has scarcely any respite from the scythe. Out in the meadows there is no such repeated cutting; they are mown but once or twice in the year. Even thus the nearer we are to God, and the more regard He has for us, the more frequent will be our adversities. To be very dear to God involves no small degree of chastisement."

IV. Its Reception.—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord," etc. 1. *It should not be deemed unimportant.* "Regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord." "We may be said to despise the chastening of the Lord," says Dr. Wardlaw, "in the following cases: (1) When it is *not felt*; when there is a want of natural sensibility to the particular stroke of the rod. This is but rare. Men in general are quite sufficiently alive to the value of temporal things. But the value is comparative. There are cherished and favourite possessions, and others less highly thought of, less fondly held. The Lord, it may be, deals gently. He spares the 'gourd.' He does not take what is most highly set by. And instead of humbly owning the kindness—being lowly and submissive, and seeking a blessing on the gentle stroke, that the heavier one may be withheld—the preservation and safety of the greater produces insensibility to the privation of the less; and the correction is thus disregarded, and proves inefficient. (2) When it is not duly felt *as from God.* (3) When

although God is seen in it and His hand is felt, it is not felt *humblly and submissively; not bowed to, but resisted.* (4) When the *design or end of correction is not laid to heart.*" 2. *It should not be deemed intolerable.* "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." We are not to sink under the reproofs and strokes of the Divine discipline, though they be severe. The fact that our trials are regulated by our Father's hand, that they are educational, that they are intended and adapted to promote our spiritual and eternal well-being, should keep us from sinking beneath their pressure.—W. Jones.

Holiness Demanded. ✓

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—Hebrews 12:14.

I. First, Then, Ye Are Anxious To Know Whether Ye Have Holiness or Not. Now, if our text said that without perfection of holiness no man could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one, who knows his own heart, ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," mark, but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. As the Spirit of God water it, it will grow till the mustard-seed shall become a tree. Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness.

1. First, there is the Pharisee. The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies.

2. Then there is the moralist. He has never done anything wrong in his life. Ah, but this is not holiness before God.

3. Another individual who thinks to get on without holiness, and who does win a fair reputation in certain

circles, is the experimentalist. You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward; to tell you the truth, there is no life at all; but their own profession is that it is all inward. You may say what you will about what you dream you have felt, you may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced; but if your own outward life be unjust, unholy, ungenerous, and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

4. There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but still there are some among us still—opinionists, who think they can do without holiness. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one; they think they have got hold of the truth, that they are the men, and that when they die the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. Down with thy hopes! Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work, this is what the Lord wants. You may perish as well with true doctrines as with false, if you pervert the true doctrine into licentiousness.

5. But to help you still further, brethren, that man is destitute of true holiness who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow.

6. And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation.

7. Again, methinks you have great cause for questioning unless your holiness is uniform. Some farmers I know in the country maintain a creditable profession in the village where they live; they go to a place of worship, and very good people they are; but there is a farmers' dinner once a

year; it is only once a year—we will not say anything about how they get home—the less that is said the better for their reputation. "It is only once a year," they tell us; but holiness does not allow of dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who, when they go abroad, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there"; and therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate it is good for nothing.

8. Then, let me further remark, that those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy.

II. *Now, then, for the second point:* "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"; that is to say, no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come without holiness. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If thou goest with Belial dost thou think Christ will go with thee?

III. *I Come to My Last Point, Which Is Pleading with You.* "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." But I hear one say, "It is impossible; I have tried it and I have broken down: I did try to get better, but I did not succeed; it is of no use, it cannot be done." You are right, my dear friend, and you are wrong. You are right, it is of no use going about it as you did; if you went in your own strength, holiness is a thing you cannot get; it is beyond you. But you are wrong to despair, for Christ can do it; He can do it for you, and He can begin it now. Believe on Him and He will begin with you; in fact, that believing will be the fruit of His having begun with you."—C. H. Spurgeon.

The Shakings of Jehovah.

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."—Hebrews 12: 26.

These Hebrew Christians were living in the midst of a great shaking. It was a time of almost universal trial. God was shaking not earth only, but also heaven. The Jewish tenure of Palestine was being shaken by the Romans, who claimed it as their conquest. The interpretation given to the Word of God by the Rabbis was being shaken by the fresh light introduced through the words and life and death of Jesus. The supremacy of the temple and its ritual was being shaken by those who taught that the true temple was the Christian Church, and that all the Levitical sacrifices had been realised in Christ. The observance of the Sabbath was being shaken by those who wished to substitute for it the first day of the week. In such a time we are living now. Everything is being shaken and tested. But there is a Divine purpose in it all, that His eternal truth may stand out more clearly, when all human traditions have fallen away, unable to resist the energy of the shock.

I. *Theological Systems Are Being Shaken.* There was a time when men received their theological beliefs from their teachers, their parents, or their Church, without a word of question or controversy. It is not so now; the air is filled with questionings. Men are putting into the crucible every doctrine which our forefathers held dear. In these terrible shakings, not one jot or tittle of God's Word shall perish, not one grain of truth shall fall to the ground, not one stone in the fortress shall be dislodged. But they are permitted to come, partly to test the chaff and wheat as a winnowing fan, but chiefly that all which is transient may pass away, whilst the

simple truth of God becomes more apparent and shines forth unhidden by the scaffolding and rubbish with which the builders have obscured its symmetry and beauty. "The things which cannot be shaken shall remain."

II. Ecclesiastical Systems Are Being Shaken. Teachers of religion are challenged to show reason for their assuming their office, or of claiming special prerogatives. Methods of work are being weighed in the balances, missionary plans trenchantly criticised, religious services metamorphosed. Change is threatening the most time-honoured customs, and all this is very distressing to those who have confused the essence with the form, the jewel with the casket, the spirit with the temple in which it dwells. But let us not fear. All this is being permitted for the wisest ends. There is a great deal of wood, hay, and stubble in all our structures which needs to be burnt up, but not an ounce of gold or silver will ever be destroyed.

III. Our Characters and Lives Are Constantly Being Shaken. What a shake that sermon gave us, which showed that all our righteousness, on which we counted so fondly, was but withered leaves! What a shake was that commercial disaster, which swept away in one blow the savings and credit of years, that were engrossing the heart, and left us only what we had of spiritual worth! What a shake was that temptation, which showed that our fancied sinlessness was an empty dream, and that we were as sensitive to temptation as those over whom we had been vaunting ourselves. What has been the net result of all these shakings? Has a hair of our heads perished? The old man has perished, but the inward man has been daily renewed. The more the marble has wasted, the more the statue has grown. As the wooden centres have been knocked down, the

solid masonry has stood out with growing completeness.—F. B. Meyer.

God a Consuming Fire.

"For our God is a consuming fire."
—Hebrews 12:29.

This is one of the shortest texts in the Bible. It takes rank with those other three brief sentences which declare the nature of God: God is Light, God is Love, God is Life. But to many it is one of the most awful sayings in the whole of Scripture. It rankles in the memory; recurs continually to the uneasy conscience; and rings its wild tocsin of alarm in the ear of the anxious inquirer. And yet there is an aspect in which it may be viewed which will make it one of the most comforting, precious passages in the whole range of inspiration.

I. Our God Is a Consuming Fire; and There Is Terror in the Symbol.

—But the terror is reserved for those who unceasingly and persistently violate His laws and despise His love. Sin is no light matter. In this world even it is fearfully avenged. Walk through certain wards in our hospitals, and tell me if anything could exceed the horror, the agony, or the penalty which is being inflicted on those who have flagrantly violated the laws of nature. And so far as we can see the physical penalties which follow upon wrongdoing are not unto life and restoration, but unto death and destruction. It is necessary that these sufferings should be veiled from the eye of man, but surely they must be taken into account, when we estimate God's treatment of sin. And if such pain, keen as fire, consumes those who violate physical law, surely we must admit that there is a still more awful doom for those who violate the laws of God's love and grace and pleading mercy.

II. Our God Is a Consuming Fire; and There Is Comfort and Blessing in the Thought.—When we yield to God's love, and open our hearts to Him, He enters into us and becomes within us a consuming fire, not to ourselves, but to the evil within us. So that, in a very deep and blessed sense, we may be said to dwell with the devouring fire and to walk amid the eternal burnings. 1. Fire is warmth. We talk of ardent desire, warm emotion, enthusiasm's glow and fire; and when we speak of God being within us as fire, we mean that He will produce in us a strong and constant affection to Himself. 2. Fire is light. We are dark enough in our natural state, but when God comes into the tabernacle of our being, the shekinah begins to glow in the most holy place; and pours its waves of glory throughout the whole being, so that the face is suffused with a holy glow and there is an evident elasticity

and buoyancy of spirits which no world-joy can produce or even imitate. 3. Fire is purity. "How long, think you, would it take a workman with hammer and chisel to get the ore from the rocks in which it lies so closely embedded? But if they are flung into the great cylinder, and the fires fanned to torrid heat, and the draught roars through the burning mass, at nightfall the glowing stream of pure and fluid metal, from which all dross and rubbish are parted, flows into the waiting mould." This is a parable of what God will do for us. Nay, more, He will burn up the wood, hay, and stubble, the grit and dross, the selfishness and evil of our nature, so that at last only the gold and silver and precious stones shall remain. The bonds that fetter us will be consumed, but not a hair of our heads shall fall to the ground.—F. B. Meyer.

JAMES

Mercy and Judgment.

"Mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
—James 2: 13.

They are both true; they are both great facts in human history and experience. Long ago a man said: "My song shall be of mercy and judgment." Surely he was a great anthem maker who could bring them both into tune. He did it, and he was right.

I. *Do Not Suppose That We Can Escape This Matter of Judgment by Some Metaphysical Argument.* Man! the matter is in thee, in thy soul, in thy blood; why shirk it, why flinch from the fact? How many there are who want to escape the Church and all that the Church means by getting up some little bubbling frothy argument about abstractions and a species

of pseudo-metaphysics. If they would but look right into the very centre of their own hearts they may see murder. That is one aspect of judgment—self-torment. We have many fine speeches about the possibility of God pardoning the sinner. Do not talk about that; first talk about the sinner pardoning himself. That is the difficulty even after Divine pardon. God has pardoned us through the cross of His dear Son, He has looked at us through the crimson medium of Calvary, and He has said mayhap, My son, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. Yes, but, Thou Almighty One, I cannot forgive myself; I am glad with a kind of grim gladness that I have been forgiven away in the eternities, but I cannot forgive myself; I did the wrong deed, and Thou must qualify me, so to say,

to forgive myself; I would accept heaven's kind pardon, but I cannot forgive my own soul. How is that to be met? I want to feed some little child because I neglected my own, but I seem to make no progress in feeding the child, the very food seems to be lost upon it: can I not have just one full round hour with my own child that I might try to make up to it what I neglected to give? That would be a kind of pardon; I thank Thee for Thy great pardon, now come to me and give me that kind of grace which will enable me to do on my side what Thou hast done on Thine.

People want to know if there is a hell. Certainly. Where is it? In you; that is where it is; in me, preacher of the Word; like all other preachers, his very soul is steeped in holy Scripture, and yet hot hell is in the man. Woe betide the soul that puzzles itself with such frivolities as, Is heaven a state or is heaven a place? No earnest mind can ask such questions; they are outside the fiery bounds of mere frivolity and curiosity.

Sometimes certain sufferings can only be expressed in terms of duration. They are poor terms, in themselves they are empty little words, but if we pile them sufficiently together they enable the soul to express its most agonistic and self-tormenting emotion. Therefore we say, "The worm that dieth not." I know it! "The fire that is not quenched." I feel it! Do not take me out to some valley near Jerusalem, and say it was a figure; take me into my own soul, where there are deeper valleys than there ever were in Jerusalem; I feel the gnawing of the worm undying, and I feel the torment that cannot be stilled but by the total Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

II. *"Mercy Rejoiceth Against Judgment."* There are some persons who

do not like to hear about judgment. They will never make any progress, and they are people not to be trusted; they are as Ephraim, a cake unturned; there is no reality of wisdom in such people; "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Mercy says, I must follow all the sin and all the misery, and I must teach all these people to say, Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. I have a great message, quoth mercy, and I must be out and tell it to the sons of distress and the daughters of weeping misery. What is the message of mercy? Does it abolish the law? No, mercy says, I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. Mercy faces judgment, mercy recognises judgment; mercy never says, Never mind the law, do not think about the law. That is not the voice of Gospel mercy. We are taken by mercy itself to Sinai, with all its rocks and rocky lines, and then taken away until we come into green slopes, even the slopes of Mount Zion. We must pass through both experiences, some in this degree, some in that. Sin is not the same thing to every soul.

III. *Judgment Is a Matter Within Human Limits Which Can Be Measured and Satisfied.* If it is a legal judgment, a man can bend his back and accept his punishment, and then stand up and challenge society to remind him of his expiated guilt. But there is another judgment that is not of the nature of social crime, but that spiritual judgment of the heart itself which is conducted in the sight of the living righteous God. Mercy is not mere sentiment; it is not a gush, it is a salvation. What does it save us from? That is a minor question, though a great one. What does it save us into? That is another interrogation, wide as heaven, lasting as duration. Have we sufficiently thought of the negative aspect of the gift of Christ? What is that negative aspect? It touches me to the quick; it is purely negative, but most

suggestive and helpful as an initial idea. What is it? "That we might not perish." We can begin with that idea; it is initial; it will do to start with; it is only negative, but of great value. "He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish." That is a minus quantity, though it is important. Is there not a positive quantity? There is, and it follows immediately upon the very words that have been quoted—"but have everlasting life."—Joseph Parker.

1 PETER

The Elect of God.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."—1 Peter 1:2.

This is no mere Jewish title, for there are passages in the Epistle which forbid the idea that it was addressed exclusively to Jews (ch. 1:18; 2:10; 4:3, 4). It is the title of the universal Church and the individual believer. The verse is a summary of the most important and difficult points of Christian doctrine: hardly a word in it but is inexhaustible.

I. *The Fact of Divine Election Stated.*—Perhaps no greater mystery in Scripture, and none more perverted; but if it is revealed from heaven we need not be afraid of it; if it comes from God, Who would draw all men unto Him, only by misunderstanding it can repel them from Him; if it be in this book, we cannot withhold it from ourselves without spiritual loss. What is the Divine election? It is used in Scripture in different connections—of election to an office (John 15:16); of election to certain privileges, as the Jews (Ps. 135:4); but in a large class of passages it clearly refers to the blessings of salvation (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4, 5, 11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; ch. 1:2). This is not election of a community, for it refers to matters necessarily personal; e.g., "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed"; "All that the Father giveth

me must come to me, and him that," etc.; "sanctification of the Spirit"; "belief of the truth"; "sprinkling of the blood"; "conformed to his Son." It must be the Divine election of individuals to eternal salvation. There are certain serious prejudices to this doctrine—such as that it is opposed to the goodness and justice of God. But that prejudice is unwarranted if the doctrine be really here, for God cannot break the bounds of His nature, and these must harmonise in some way, though as yet we see not how. At the same time, notice that it is election to salvation, not to perdition; we are saved by the sovereign grace of God, we are lost because of our own sin ("Come, ye blessed of my Father!"); but it is only, "Depart, ye cursed!"). Why does not grace save all? All we know is that it does not, and that "the Lord is righteous in all his ways," and what we know not now we shall know. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Another prejudice: It seems opposed to the freedom and responsibility of man. Certainly man is free; he is commanded to repent and believe, and held responsible for not obeying, and is reasoned and pleaded with by God; and "How often would I, but ye would not!" We cannot harmonise that with election, yet they may both be true. If we make an objection in this to seeking salvation, it is not as we act in other matters; we know that our recovery from sickness is amongst what God has determined,

yet we use means for recovery, and are hopeless otherwise; so, as though there were no foreordination to eternal life, we are responsible for employing the means to secure it. If we are lost, it will not be because of foreordination, but because in our freedom we failed to use the necessary means. Another prejudice is that the doctrine seems opposed to the universal offer of salvation. Salvation is offered to all; "God willeth not the death of a sinner"; all are commanded to believe, and are condemned for not believing. Then election is not out of harmony with that, and closes the door to the salvation of none. We may not see the harmony, but God's secret purposes cannot contradict His declared purposes.

II. Certain Particulars Respecting This Divine Election.—Father, Son, and Spirit—the whole Godhead, so to speak, combine to the redemption of a single soul. 1. The source of election: "The foreknowledge of God the Father." The word "to know" in Scripture is often used for "to know with favour" (Matt. 7:23; Rom. 11:2; 8:29). God knows, foreknows all, so that the idea of foreknowledge with favour is involved in the expression in these passages. So here; the same word as is translated "foreordained" in verse 20—the foreknowledge of purpose, favour, as in Eph. 1:5, 9, 11. Our salvation is entirely on a Divine basis; we are not elect because of anything in ourselves; we choose Him because He first chose us (Eph. 1:4). 2. The working out of election: "The sanctification of the Spirit." Sanctification in the sense of separation, something that comes before "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"; separation to God, equivalent to the new birth; for only thus are we called out from the world, from its joy, and sorrows, and principles, and attitude towards God. This is the seal of election—the elect are the separated; the Spirit

separates for God those whom God chooses for Himself. And this separation is carried on to faith and every Christian grace, and final perfection in heaven. 3. The end of election: "Obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." "Obedience" here can hardly mean "submission to law"; it probably stands for the full expression, "the obedience of faith," as in Rom. 1:8 (comp. with 16:19; 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8; ch. 4:17). The passage, then, is a striking parallel to 2 Thess. 2:13. The end of election is faith, and the consequent application of the atoning blood. Because of what the sprinkling of that blood does for us: justifies (Rom. 3:9); cleanses (1 John 1:7); seals to us the blessings of the covenant (1 Cor. 11:25); heaven (Heb. 10:19).

III. The Benefits of the Divine Election.—"Grace and peace multiplied." The fact of election can only be stated because there is untold good in it. It is essentially the believer's doctrine. For such it is full of encouragement and support. 1. It assures us of the certainty of multiplied grace. If God chose us to all the blessings of perfect salvation, it is certain we shall have them. Nothing can be more sure than God's eternal purpose. 2. And this assurance produces perfect peace. None can be afraid who have (in the separation of the Spirit) the seal that they are divinely elected to grace multiplied without end.—Charles New.

Redeemed by Blood.

"*The precious blood of Christ.*"—1 Peter 1:19.

Probably it is the most momentous fact about us that we have been redeemed. It is much to have been created. It is much to be endowed with life in a world so full of marvellous

possibilities as ours. It is much to have a soul, which can call up the past, or interrogate the present, or anticipate and prepare for the future. But it is more that we have been redeemed. Redeemed, as Israel from the bondage of Egypt; or as a slave, by his goel, from captivity to some rich creditor; or as the captive of some hideous vice emancipated from its thrall.

I. The Cost of Our Redemption Has Been Immense.

1. Negatively. "Not with corruptible things; as silver and gold." A moneyed man, who has been accustomed to look on his wealth as the key to every treasure-chest, is sometimes startled to find how little it can really do. God could have given suns of gold, and stars of silver, constellations of bodies glowing with precious metals, but none of these would have been sufficient to free one soul from the curse or penalty of sin, or to change it into a loyal and loving subject of His reign. The Creator must give not things, but life—not His gifts, but Himself, ere He could redeem.

2. Positively. "But with the precious blood of Christ. The blood is the life. Life is man's supreme possession and his supreme gift. And, in addition, when blood is mentioned with the laying down of life, there is the further thought of intense suffering, of violence, &c. The blood of Jesus was precious, because of the dignity of His nature, and because of His perfect character. Without blemish, that is, without personal sin. Without spot, that is, not defiled by contact with sinners. And thus it was adequate for the work of cleansing away the terrible aggregate of sin.

II. *The Object of Our Redemption.* "From your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." It is our ransom price, the purchase-money of our entire being to be Christ's. The purchaser of any slave

regarded him as his chattel, his goods. His word and will were absolute law. Such are the rights which our glorious Master has over us. Who, then, of us can live as we have been wont, following after vanity, treading in the footsteps of our forefathers, content to do as others before us? New claims have come in. Our Redeemer is Lord.

III. *The Characteristic of the Redeemed.* "Who by him do believe in God."—F. B. Meyer.

The Conscience.

"Having a good conscience."—1 Peter 3:16.

The word "conscience" does not occur often in the Bible. It does not occur once in the Old Testament, but the thing "conscience" is in the Bible from first to last. Why was it that our first parents, when they had eaten the forbidden fruit, were ashamed to look in each other's faces; and why was it that they hid among the trees? That was conscience. Or take the very next story in the Bible—the death of Abel. Why did Cain hear a voice rising from his brother's blood to heaven, and why did he flee from it, a fugitive and a vagabond? That was conscience. Conscience, in fact, is everywhere in the Bible. Without conscience there would be no religion. But let us define clearly what conscience is, and what it does. Conscience has been called the moral sense. Now, what does that mean? It means this: that as by the sense of taste we distinguish what is sweet and what is sour, and by the sense of hearing we distinguish what is harmonious and what is discordant, and by the other bodily senses we discriminate the qualities of material things, so in the soul there is a sense which distinguishes right from wrong, and that is the conscience. There

have been many nations who have never seen the Ten Commandments, and yet they have known quite well that to lie, and to steal, and to kill are wrong. How did they know that? St. Paul seems to tell us when he says, in one of the profoundest passages of his writings, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," &c. In opposition to this sceptical philosophers have pointed to the barbarities which have claimed the sanction of conscience, and from these undeniable facts they have drawn the inference that conscience knows no more and no better than custom; but the power resident in human nature of rising out of superstitious practices, and seeing the better life when it shows itself, appears to prove that behind such mistakes there is a power of discerning "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest," &c. The conscience is the categorical imperative. That is a name given to it by the German philosopher Kant. I suppose it is too big a name. It brings out a second feature. As soon as it is ascertained that one course is right and the opposite one wrong, the conscience commands us to follow the one course and avoid the other. Thus it is imperative; and it is a categorical imperative—that is to say, it accepts no excuse. The course which conscience commands may apparently be contrary to our interests; it may be dead against our inclinations; it may be contrary to all we are advised to do by friends and companions; but conscience does not on that account in the least withdraw its imperative. We must obey. We may yield to temptation or be carried away by the force of passion; but we know that we ought to obey. It is our duty, and that is the grand word of conscience. It is conscience that tells us what duty is. I am sure you all remember in the "Heart of Midlothian" how Jeanie Deans, with

her heart bursting with love for her frail sister, yet refuses to deviate one hair's breadth from the truth, although her falsehood would save her sister's life. But such scenes do not occur merely in fiction. Perhaps the grandest scene of modern history is the appearance of Luther at the Diet of Worms, when, facing the hostile powers of all Europe, he said, "It is neither safe nor honest to do anything against conscience. Here stand I, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." There is never an hour passes but in the secrecy of some man's soul or in the obscurity of business life some one, putting aside the promptings of self-interest and the frowns of power, pays the same tribute to conscience by doing right and taking the consequences. Conscience has often been compared to a court of justice, in which there are the culprit, the judge, the jury, and the witnesses; but, strange to say, these all are in every man's own breast. Ay, and the executioner is there too who carries out the sentence. There is not one of us who does not know in some degree both the pain and horror of a condemning conscience and the pleasure of an approving conscience. A habitually approving conscience gives even to the outward man elasticity and courage, while a habitually condemning conscience gives to a man a look of confusion and misery. One of the great writers whom I have already quoted has a wonderful passage in which the two characters are put in contrast. I wish I could quote it all, but I will quote a few of the most significant sentences. Here is first the picture of a very good man, with a habitually approving conscience: "He was sleeping peacefully, and was wrapped up in a long garment of brown wool, which covered his arms down to the wrists. His head was thrown back on the pillow in the easy attitude of repose, and his hand, adorned with the pastoral ring, and

which had done so many good deeds, hung out of bed. His entire face was lit up by a vague expression of satisfaction, hope and beatitude—it was more than a smile, and almost a radiance. There was almost a divinity in this unconsciously august man." And here is the opposite picture. The burglar, on the contrary, "was standing in the shadow with his crowbar in his hand, motionless and terrified by this luminous old man. He had never seen anything like this before, and such confidence horrified him"; and then he adds, "The moral world has no greater spectacle than this—a troubled, restless conscience, which is on the point of committing a bad action, contemplating the sleep of a just man." In all ages the higher imaginative literature has found its best resources in depicting the horrors of a guilty conscience. The ancient Greeks represented these terrors by the Furies, who with shadowy, silent, but remorseless steps, pursued the criminal until they pulled him down; and in such dramas as "Macbeth" and "Richard III," Shakespeare is dealing with the same theme. You all remember how, when King Duncan was murdered, a paralysing and agonising terror fell on his murderer; and how, in "Richard III," on the night before the battle in which the tyrant received the reward of his deeds, ghosts of the victims of his tyranny passed one by one through his tent, summoning him to meet them on the battlefield, until the man, streaming with perspiration, sprang from his bed, crying—

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

But observe this, that not only does a man's own conscience pass sentence

on his conduct; but the consciences of others, if they chance to be acquainted with it, do so too, and to this may be due a great intensification either of the pleasure or the pain which conscience causes. For instance, a man may have committed a crime and suffered for it in his conscience, but gradually time assuages his pain, and he is forgetting it. Well, suddenly it is found out, and the conscience of the public is brought to bear on him. He is put out of respectable society, and feels now for the first time the full enormity of what he has done. The conscience is an intuition of God. We have seen that as soon as the choice is made and the deed done, conscience inflicted immediate reward or punishment. But it has another function. It hints unmistakably at reward and punishment yet to come, and from another source. You remember how Hamlet expresses this when contemplating the crime of suicide:

"The dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from
whose bourne
No trav'ler returns, puzzles the
will,
And makes us rather bear those ills
we have,
Than fly to others that we know
not of.
Thus conscience doth make cowards
of us all."

In the Egyptian book of the dead, which has just been published in Europe, but is many centuries older than the Christian era, two hundred and forty figures are represented as meeting the soul when it enters the other world. These are virtues, and to each of them the soul has to answer how far it has practised these virtues in this life; and besides this strict inquiry, up in the corner of the picture God is represented weighing the heart. Analyse your own consciousness when

conscience is acting, and see if it does not inform you that God is looking on. For instance, when you have done something wrong, and are feeling ashamed and horrified, are you not aware that God is near you, and that it is from His hand that retribution is to come? Will you permit me to say a word about the cultivation of the conscience? Conscience is the foundation of character. Does a man listen to the voice within him? Can he look himself straight in the eyes? That is the most important question you can ask about any man. There are some men and women that would almost as soon meet a tiger in the jungle as meet themselves in solitude. But if a man is accustomed day by day to bring his conduct under the survey of his own conscience, and if he is moved with joy and sorrow according to the sentences which conscience pronounces, that man is safe. He will not need to mind much what the opinion of other people is about him. Yet conscientiousness is not everything. It may be only a petty and self-satisfied pharisaism. There are few things that astonish me so much as to find how many people there are whose final judgment on themselves is this, that they have never done any one any harm, and they have not much to reproach themselves with. That betrays an unenlightened conscience. The conscience requires to be made observant and sensitive by acquaintance with the law of God, as revealed in His Word, and especially as expounded by Christ Himself, when He taught that even when the outward conduct is correct the law may be broken, in the secret thoughts and wishes.—James Stalker.

Christ's Sufferings; Or, the Basis of Evangelism.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins."—1 Peter 3:18.

I. *They Were Endured Once.* He hath "once suffered." The word "once" is capable of being taken in two senses. The sense of actuality; that is, the mere expression of the fact that He had suffered. Or, it may be taken in the sense of onliness. "Once for all":—"never again," as Bengel has it, "to suffer hereafter" (Heb. 4:28). Taken in this sense, two ideas are suggested:

1. That nothing more for the purpose is needed. His sufferings are sufficient.

2. That nothing more for the purpose will be vouchsafed. "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

II. *They Were Endured by a Just Person.* The "Just." Christ was "without sin." He was at once the foundation, standard, the revelation, of eternal rectitude.

III. *They Were Endured on Behalf of the Unjust.*

1. This is a proof of His amazing love. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die," &c.

2. This is an encouragement for the greatest sinner. "The unjust" of all grades and types of wickedness.

IV. *They Were Endured To Bring the Unjust to God.* "That He might bring us to God."

1. Legally: They remove all governmental obstructions to reconciliation.

2. Morally: They remove the enmity of the human heart, and are the means of uniting the soul in love to its Maker.

3. Locally: Although God is everywhere, yet in heaven He is specially seen and enjoyed.

V. *They Were Endured to the Utmost Extent.* "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit."

1. Here is the death of His human nature—"the flesh." "He suffered even unto death."

2. Here is the revivification of His human nature by the Divine Spirit:—

"quickened in the Spirit." The subject furnishes—First: Encouragement to suffering Christians. Secondly: A rebuke to those who limit the provisions of the Gospel. Redemptive mercy is not for a favourite few—it is for the unjust. Thirdly: A lesson to the impenitent. What ingratitude is yours!—D. Thomas.

A Good Conscience.

"The answer of a good conscience."
—1 Peter 3:21.

I. *We Have To Take Note of a Marvellous Faculty*, instinctive in human nature, which we have learned to call conscience, and having called it conscience have often dismissed out of our minds; a faculty which is recognised by every one, however they may explain it; a faculty which enables us to know the difference between right and wrong, as the eye knows the difference between black and white. Every one of us knows that conscience exists.

II. *And the Second Point Which We Must Note* is that conscience, although it is a gift of God to men, must, like all gifts, be educated and enlightened. There are some who seem to think that when they have done a thing conscientiously the question is over. It is not over at all. The question is, Ought they to have done that thing, however conscientiously? Has the conscience entrusted to them by God been sufficiently enlightened with all the light which is possible for them in order to make it act as God would have it act? If we are to gain the first essential element of Christian joy, the answer of a good conscience, we have to use every possible means in our power to keep our consciences enlightened.

III. *Have We Got It?* 1. Have you the answer of a good conscience

with regard to your city and business life? 2. Or, again, there are some who complain that they have no joy or happiness in their homes. Whose fault is it? Have you the answer of a good conscience, or is it your temper which is at the bottom of the unhappiness of your home?—Bishop Winnington-Ingram.

Doom of the Impenitent.

"What shall be the end of them that obey not?"—1 Peter 4:17.

I. Not Annihilation.

1. Future punishment of some kind seems essential to the moral government of God.

2. The fact of there being various degrees in punishment makes it impossible for that punishment to be annihilation.

3. All that is said about the sinner's doom shuts out the idea of annihilation (Luke 12:4, 5; Matt. 13:41, 42; Mark 9:43).

II. *Not Merely a Temporary Punishment.* The most general argument brought against eternal punishment is that it is opposed to the perfect justice of God. "The punishment," they say, "being eternal must at last exceed the sin." In order to understand aright the nature of the sin, you must bear in mind the being against whom the sin is committed. It is against Jehovah, the Infinite One, and against one to whom we are under infinite obligations. "But," say others, "God is infinitely merciful, and the very idea of eternal suffering is opposed to that attribute." It may be according to your idea of that mercy, and yet not against that mercy itself. Remember God is as just as He is merciful. That mercy can permit eternal suffering is proved by the fact that it does in the case of Satan and the rebel angels. There will be nothing in hell to refine or alter the sin-

ner. Hell fire is no "refiner's fire," to purge the dross away.—A. G. Brown.

Humility Illustrated and Enforced.

"Be clothed with humility."—1 Peter 5:5.

I. Humility Illustrated. When St. Augustine was asked what was the first grace of a Christian, he answered, humility: what the second, humility: what the third, humility. This grace is more fundamental to the nature of all true religion than any other grace whatever. The foundation of repentance is laid in an abasing sense of our guilt. The reason why men are not humble is that they do not see the greatness of God. It is the effect of all knowledge to humble us, by producing a sense of our distance from the object which we contemplate: the farther we advance in knowledge, the more this distance widens on our view: hence where an Infinite Being, God, is the object of contemplation, there must be infinite scope for humility in His worshippers. The Gospel is peculiarly adapted to produce this feeling: this is its very end and effect: "no flesh shall glory in his presence; the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." This effect arises from the very constitution of the Gospel; as it is a revelation of the free grace of God to sinners, without any respect to moral or natural differences of character.

II. The Motive by Which Such a Temper Is Recommended.

1. "God resisteth the proud." The expression is very emphatic; He sets Himself in battle array against him; marks him as an object of peculiar indignation. It is not so said of any other temper. When the heart is filled by pride, nothing but spiritual barrenness and hardness can ensue.

In a word, the proud are equally disqualified for the duties of Christianity here, and for the blessings of glory hereafter.

2. "But," as it is added, "he giveth grace to the humble." The same words are used by the apostle James, with the additional expression, "He giveth more grace." The humble feel their poverty, and pray for grace; and their prayers are heard.

III. Let Us, Then, Seek and Cherish This Grace, the only temper that can make us shine before God, the only one that can render us blessings to each other. The apostle exhorts us to "be clothed with humility." Men always use and wear their clothing, and we are to be clothed with this grace as a permanent vesture. It should pervade every part of our character; all the faculties of the mind: it should regulate the understanding, the will, and the affections. And then all other graces will shine the brighter through the veil of humility: it will shed a cheering influence on all.—R. Hall.

The Roaring Lion.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."—1 Peter 5:8.

Dr. Livingstone tells us of an African native who was struck down and torn by a lion, that periodically the dreadful pains returned to the old wound, as if again the monster gnawed at the bone. So was it, I think, with Peter. The old lion had struck him down and fixed his teeth in his prey. Snatched from the jaws of the destroyer by David's greater Son, yet the scar throbbed with vivid reminders of the peril, and brought again before him the memory of his great deliverance. Let us turn and look upon this terrible man-slayer.

I. Here Is a Very Real Enemy.

He is an old doctor, as Latimer calls him, and well-versed in arts and crafts; but his master-stroke has been reserved for these times. There is a fable of a fox that caught its prey by pretending to be dead. That is the last of Satan's devices. A hundred years ago everything was put down to him—storms, earthquakes, eclipses, plagues, diseases; there was ascribed to him a power and activity that were almost infinite. Thanks to science, she has cast the devil out of the hailstorm and the thunder-cloud, and has taught us at least some of the laws which regulate these things. So he has altered his tactics, and with a humility which his betters might imitate he has announced his own decease. "I am dead"—saith the devil—"indeed there is no devil. I am passed away with witchcraft and ghosts and all the silly nonsense of the dark ages." No, no. We have a more sure word of prophecy to which we do well to give heed. This old adversary is as real for you and for me as he ever was. As real for us as he was for Adam, or for Job, or for Judas. Your adversary—says the apostle, as if he had marked us out for his prey. We dare not ignore him. We dare not make light of him. He tracks our steps and seeks us as his prey. Be sober, be vigilant.

II. He Is a Mighty Foe. The glimpses we have of him in the Bible reveal one of vast dominion and of amazing power; probably of all God's creatures one of the first in the order of time and highest in rank; amongst the foremost of the angels that do excel in strength. There is a majesty about him as of one conscious of vast power. Think of his triumphs. Away up in the mountain caves is the den of the lion, the mouth and floor of it all strewn with the bones of his victims; skulls and ribs lie thickly scattered. But what a sight

it were to look into the den of this old lion the devil, and to see the mischief that he hath wrought!

III. He Is a Subtle Foe. Think of his knowledge of human nature. How perfectly he understands us! As an old Puritan says, "He taketh the measure of every man's foot, and then he fitteth him instantly." Therefore let us put up a double guard on the side of our weakness. Be sober, be vigilant, and, most of all, be sober and be vigilant where the peril threatens most. It is then that the devil can do most harm when he finds a traitor-wish within the soul—into whose ear he can whisper, a traitor that he can bribe. And not only of our besetments does he make use. Our very virtues he tries to turn into handles for his malice. Here is a pleasant, genial, good-hearted fellow —ah! the devil leads him on and tumbles him into the ditch of self-indulgence, or fetcheth him away by evil company. This man is thrifty and saving, and the devil elbows him on year after year until he casts him into that horrible pit of miserliness. This man is generous, but the devil puffs him up with the sense of his importance. This man is very humble, and the devil pushes him down so far in the valley of humility that he begins to climb up the other side and is proud of being so humble. This man is resolute and determined, and the devil eggs him on until he is overbearing and tyrannical. And this man is modest and retiring, and the devil keeps him lazy and useless by assuring him that he has no gifts. He can do almost as much with our virtues as with our vices. For all conditions and for all circumstances the tempter has his attack. Turn to the great temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, again, he seeks to turn our very mercies to our mischief. The lusciousness and beauty of the fruit in Paradise is made to awaken Eve's desire; and when she

wished for it, lo! there it was hanging within reach. He is a cruel foe. A lion for his might, he is also a lion for his savage cruelty. His name is Apollyon, the destroyer. To worry if he cannot overthrow; to annoy if he cannot destroy. "Oh, sir," said one to me one day, as gentle and loving a man as ever lived, "I loved my wife better than my life, but when I was drunk it was as if the devil was in me, and I always began knocking her about. I beat her one night so that she could eat nothing but spoon meat for eleven days. And then when I saw what I had done I had to get drunk again just to forget it." He is a cruel monster, a hard master, driving his poor slave to lowest depths.

4. *Lastly, This Old-Lion Can Be Overcome.* "Be sober, be vigilant." The first word suggests our peril from over-eagerness. People who go rushing into anything and everything, rush into the lion's den and thrust their heads into his very mouth. There are some people that the old lion must hunt for, but the over-eager he can get by lying still. Be sober. Take a right estimate of things. Measure things by God and by eternity. Don't be too thirsty—that is the meaning

of the precept—too thirsty for pleasure; too thirsty for money; too thirsty for honour; too thirsty for your own way in everything. Travellers tell us that there are certain places where you may generally trace the steps of the old lion and expect to find him waiting about. They are the drinking places, where he can spring upon his prey in a moment. Be sober. And yet be vigilant. The too anxious are in peril; but so are the too careless. Be vigilant. But is that all? What is the good of telling the little lamb to be sober and vigilant when the old lion is about? We must go further back and further forward for the instructions as to our safety. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God." Be so little and so weak that you have no faith in yourself at all—and creep for your safety in under that mighty hand. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Beneath that hand I cannot know a fear. Here am I as within a fortress whose walls can neither be scaled nor undermined. That Presence alone is our safety. "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." Be bold because thine hand is in the hand of thy God.—M. G. Pearse.

2 PETER

The Sinner's Hire.

"Who loved the wages of unrighteousness."—2 Peter 2:15.

In the course of his denunciation of abandoned sinners St. Peter makes use in two places of this remarkable expression, "the wages of unrighteousness," or "the hire of wrongdoing"—in the fifteenth verse as something loved and sought by Baalam, and in the twelfth verse as that which shall be the portion of the

impenitent transgressor. The idea was one which evidently took very forcible possession of the apostle's mind, and, however little it may be in harmony with the sentimental and purblind type of religion too prevalent in our time, it is an idea in perfect harmony with the stern and righteous government of God. Upon the suggestion of the twofold application of the thoughts in this chapter, it may be well to treat this serious and awful subject under two aspects.

I. *The Sinner's Illusion as to His*

Work and His Wages.—Life is represented as a bondman's service, and in any case the representation is appropriate and just. But experience of human character and history leads to the conclusion, which coincides with the teaching of revelation, that men constantly engage and continue in the service of sin under a double illusion. 1. They imagine the work which they undertake to be easy and agreeable. By many devices the tyrant sin disguises the evils of his service, and induces his victims to continue in it to their souls' injury and ruin. The pleasures of sin are for a season, and they who indulge in them are like those who eat of the fair apples of the Dead Sea, which turn to ashes in the mouth. 2. They imagine the reward of the service to be liberal and satisfactory. As Balaam lusted for the gold which was to be his hire, as Judas clutched the thirty pieces of silver which were the price of his Master's blood, so the bondmen of ungodliness deceive themselves with the imagination that the reward they will partake will enrich and satisfy their nature. Whether it be wealth or pleasure, power or praise, they set their hearts upon it, and it becomes to them as the supreme good. In such an illusion years of sin and folly may be passed.

II. *The Sinner's Awakening to a Sense of the Reality as to Both the Work and the Wages of Sin.*—1. The service is, sooner or later, found to be mere slavery. The chains may be gilded, but they are chains for all that. The dwelling may have the semblance of a palace, but it is in fact a prison. The master's speech may be honeyed, but it is the speech of a tyrant, cruel and relentless. 2. The hire of wrong-doing is not payment, but punishment. "The way of transgressors" is found to be "hard." "The wages of sin is death."

Application:—Let these considerations lead the sinner to forsake the

tyrant's service, repudiate the tyrant's claims, and fling back the tyrant's hire.—J. R. Thomson.

Wresting Scripture.

"*They that are unlearned and unstable wrest.*"—2 Peter 3:16.

I. *The Men Whose Evil Handling of the Scripture I Am Going to Point Out* are described generally in our text as "unlearned and unstable." Those meant by "unlearned" are men who, whatever be their human knowledge, have either never "learned of the Father," or who are at best, "unskilled in the Word of righteousness" (Heb. 5:13); and, he adds, "unstable men"—men who, if in some degree enlightened, yet are not established in the faith, but are like "children driven to and fro and tossed about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

II. *Now Let Us See What Are the Various Ways in Which This Offence Against God's Book May Be Committed.*

1. One of the most awful ways of wresting Holy Scripture is where men try to draw out of its pages a justification of their sins. David, they say, was once guilty of adultery—Jacob of deceit—and Peter of a lying oath; and yet they were good men. And this, they think, is either a warrant or excuse for the sins in which they live themselves. Oh! when men read a portion of God's Word which describes some evil deed, and are tempted from His silence to suppose He disregarded it, let them look at other portions. Let them think of His most holy laws; let them mark His terrible threatenings, "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18).

2. Another grievous way of wresting Scripture is where men try to draw out of its doctrines a justifica-

tion of their doing nothing for their souls.

3. A third way in which Holy Scripture may be "wrested," and often, I fear, is so, is as follows: Men adopt a certain set of doctrines as their own, these doctrines may seem to be the language of certain texts of Scripture, but are evidently contrary to others. What, then, do they do when they are pressed with all those passages which make against them? Why, they try to give these passages another meaning. They find out some ingenious method of explaining them away, or of adapting them to their own peculiar views.

4. I will speak of one instance more of the "wresting" of the Scriptures. It is where men quote Scripture, as Satan did (Matt. 4:6), by halves, so as to make it seem to speak the thing they wish. How awful is that threatening which is addressed in the Book of Revelation to all such triflers with the Bible! (Rev. 22:18, 19).

III. *How, Then, Are We to Escape the Guilt and Danger of Wresting Holy Scripture?*

1. The chief means, most assuredly, of avoiding such a guilt as this, are to pray for the Spirit as our Guide and Interpreter in reading His own Book.

2. Let me recommend to you, again, some frames of mind in which we must ever pray and strive to open the Lord's Book.

(1) One is a sense of our own ignorance, with a desire, a most unfeigned desire, to be led and taught of Holy Scripture.

(2) Again, it is a great point to study Holy Scripture in simplicity of mind without any prejudice or bias.

(3) He who would shun the sin of wresting Holy Scripture must study it with diligence. He must take all the pains he can to ascertain its real meaning.

(4) So as not to wrest it to your own destruction—study it as a sinner searching for a Saviour.—A. Roberts.

1 JOHN

Cleansing Blood of Christ.

"And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1:7.

While there are happily many signs of return to a deeper and more Evangelic conception of Christianity, there are also symptoms that disquiet and dishearten. Among these we place the acceptance, so far as it has gone, among Evangelical teachers, of Bishop Westcott's exegesis of the text, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all "sin." By Dr. Westcott the cleansing action is explained not in connection with propitiation and acceptance, but as the internal purification of will and

thought and heart by the life-power of our Lord in His people. In other words, the blood is practically the life or spirit of Jesus Christ working in His members. Even the literary sense might teach that the apostle meant something far deeper than that. But while human nature remains what it is, there will be a strong tendency to put forward the impartation of spiritual life and a subjective moral deliverance, and to throw into the far background all that has to do with the satisfaction of Christ, the broken law, the sense of guilt and remorse, and the reversal of Divine condemnation.

I. When we look at the text, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and keep in view

the analogy of the apostle's writings and the tenor of the New Testament, we can hardly fail to come to the conclusion so ably advocated by Dr. Moule as against Westcott by a long array of Scriptural passages from the Old and New Testament. Dr. Moule shows that the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son is the blood of death, the seal of the covenant, the crux of atoning sacrifice. The idea of life does not enter at all. Fellowship with God and walking in the light can never take sin away. No emotion, no feeling, no attainment, no height of spirituality, can remove our guilt. Our guilt was taken away by the great Propitiation, when He suffered without the gate, and knew the withdrawals of God. We have our peace not from the reigning Saviour, but from the bleeding Saviour, not from the King in His glory, but from the Redeemer in His shame. For this text speaks of a complete cleansing. We are cleansed from all sin. Even though the body of sin crucified within us is dying its slow, difficult death, there is a great sense in which we are even now delivered from all evil. Through the blood-shedding of Christ we have remission of sins now, and are truly forgiven as we shall be when the light of the glory of God falls on the resurrection face. So far as sin is a matter of guilt before God, it is taken away even to the last relic of evil, and we walk with God in the light, having our conversation above the skies. Is it impossible to understand this? Are the words of the hymn dark to us?

He beheld her broken-hearted,
Ruined and undone;
Yet enthroned among the angels,
Brighter than the sun.

When we fall again, when the imagination plays traitor, and the affections parley, and the soul is betrayed,

still we claim again the merit of the atoning sacrifice, and are cleansed from all sin. No doubt it is true that the Spirit uses the doctrine of the Atonement to the fostering of holiness, and turns the sinner's face to God. But evermore what cleanses us is that which remained of Christ when the fire had passed over Him, even the enduring merits of His great sacrifice sprinkled upon us through the Holy Ghost.

II. In full keeping with this are all the references in St. John's books. When we turn to the Apocalypse we find ourselves instantly in the presence of the Lamb slain and immaculate in the midst of the throne of God. Jesus was the Lamb of God's Passover, not merely consecrated, not merely bruised and smitten, but put to death—slain. The blood that cleanses is not the blood of a martyr, but the blood of the Lamb. The blood of a martyr could no more take away sin than the blood of bulls and goats, but through the blood of the Lamb we have eternal redemption. We overcome the Arch-enemy by the blood of the Lamb. If we face the Accuser with argument drawn from our works and our feeling, we shall infallibly be overthrown. But the wounds of Jesus plead for us, and we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of His testimony. Therefore said one: "Lie asoak in the Atonement, put thy broken heart to sleep over the breast of Christ, hard by his woud." If we do this, through the blood of the Lamb, who has paid our debt, fought our battle, endured in our stead, we are righteous in God's presence even now. Sin is removed from the conscience, and the day approaches fast when all sin will end. For when the Sabbath of eternity breaks, there will come with it the last sprinkling with hyssop, and we shall be cleansed so—clean every whit. Meanwhile it is through this blood that the olden curse

of the race is gone, that the doom of the past is taken away, that the remaining perils of this mortal life are overruled, that we are to be brought through the terrors of the end, the falling of the star Wormwood, the final dreadful struggle between good and evil, the last trials of the sons of God.

III. Another book, the teaching of which on this great theme is frequently misunderstood, is the Epistle to the Hebrews. We read there that the sacrifices offered year by year continually could not make the comers thereunto perfect. For if they could, the sacrifices would have been offered no more, because the worshippers once purged would have had no more conscience of sin. Wherefore since the law could not help, Christ came, saying, "Thou didst not will the offering of beasts. Thou didst prepare me a body, and I am come to do thy will and offer myself in that body." He did offer the true and final oblation for sin, and having made it He sat down at the right hand of God. He entered into the holiest with His own blood, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Once purged we have no more conscience of sin. His death and the offering of His blood, His entrance into the very communion and presence of the Be-

ing of God, opens the sanctuary on high for all believers. They are said repeatedly to be purged, sanctified, made perfect. The slightest examination of these passages should show that the reference cannot be to an internal purification. The Apostle speaks of a single act of purging or purifying the conscience. That cannot refer to sin as a moral condition of the mind, but to sin in that sense in which it is taken away by sacrifice. It means that the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, that the obstacle to fellowship raised by the sins of the people has been taken away by the Propitiation, and that no sense of guilt is left in the heart that has received a free and unburdened pardon. So, in the same way, when it is said that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, the idea of sanctification is not of a gradual change of mind from defilement to purity, not a progressive relation to God of a worshipping people. And in the same way the perfection to which the Author of Salvation has brought us is not the endowment with every quality of excellence, nor the removal of every tendency to sin. It means that we have been brought within the Covenant relation, and that, being there, we shall come at last into the full and true fellowship of God.—W. Robertson Nicoll.

JUDE

Second Coming—Christ's.

"Behold, the Lord cometh."—Jude 14.

This majestic fragment of a long-lost book, like some surviving torso, gives us a conception of what must have been the perfection of the whole. It also shows the character of Enoch's

piety, who is described as "walking with God," and is commended as having "pleased God" by his faith. It was not the unsubstantial piety of the deist, who worships God merely as the Author of nature, but it was faith in the God of revelation, who had revealed Himself to Adam as the Holy One and the Just, who was revealing Himself to Enoch in his capacity as

prophet, and who would reveal Himself again and again in fulfilment of His word. The God of the deist never comes; the God of the Bible has come and is ever coming.

It is significant that this most ancient recorded prophecy should begin with that with which the last Old Testament prophet ends the ancient literature of Israel, and with which the prophet of Patmos also closes the New Testament. "Behold, the Lord cometh," says Enoch. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come," says Malachi. Christ's name in the Apocalypse is still the Coming One. He says in the end of that book of mystery, "Surely I come quickly," and the Church answers, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Christ's Advent is the chief burthen of the prophetic message. Reference to a few leading passages will illustrate this fact.

In Deuteronomy 32:2, Moses speaks of God's revelation of Himself to Israel in the wilderness. In Psalm 40:7, 8, Christ Himself speaks of His advent. In Psalm 96:12, 13, David predicts the advent. In Isaiah 59:20, the prophet predicts the appearing of the Redeemer.

Since, then, the coming of God means in Scripture, God's revelation of Himself, there have been as many coming as occasions of revelation. The divers manners of action, speech, and influence, whereby God manifested Himself of old, were all so many coming. He came to destroy the Cities of the Plain; He came to deliver Israel from Egypt; He came to Mount Sinai; He came to His temple; He came whenever an inspired prophet prophesied. But as all revelation culminates in Christ the Mediator, the appearing of Christ is called the Coming. And as there has been one appearing of Christ which is the object of our faithful and loving remembrance, and there is to be another which is the object of our hopeful anticipation, so we speak of

the First and Second Advents of our Lord. These two Advents are the two chief moments in the history of the world, and give character to all our revealed religion.

The two Advents are not clearly distinguished in the prophets, but their descriptions are blent together. Nor are they separated in the celebration of this season. At the commencement of the Christian Year, the Church commemorates the First Advent, and looks forward to the Second. They are undistinguished in this prophecy of Enoch's, which holds good of both. The two Advents must largely have a common character, or they could not have been both predicted in the same words.

The Coming of Christ is—

I. *For Judgment:* To execute judgment upon all.

Judgment is not necessarily condemnation. Here it takes effect on all. It is the discrimination of righteousness; the highest moral perspicacity and authority in exercise upon its proper objects. Some are approved, others are condemned; some are attracted, others repelled; and thus a separation is effected. The appearing of the Lord of the holy law and of the conscience necessarily had a judicial effect. He attracted John and repelled Caiaphas. Even when He was on the Cross, He proved a divider. Penitence was on one hand, obstinacy on the other. So will it be at the last.

"God's justice," says Dr. Gideon Harvey, "is an attribute, whereby he separateth all those from His presence that are unlike to Him."

The Coming of Christ is—

II. *For Conviction:* and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

The sins specified in the context are ungodly deeds and hard speeches

against God. Enoch, although himself a sublime saint, lived in an age of wickedness, which rendered his independence the more conspicuous and his piety the more excellent. The ungodly deeds were acts of rebellion against the rightful Lord; and the hard speeches were blasphemies, perhaps for exclusion from the Garden, for the obstinacy of the soil, and the labour which it rendered necessary to obtain food. The prophet predicted that the Lord at His coming would convince sinners of their wickedness, would not only condemn them, but make them condemn themselves.

In the time of Christ, sinners were conscience-stricken. The Pharisees cowered before His eye and His voice. The publican Zacchæus was brought to repentance and restitution. Rash but infirm Peter was moved to tears. The dying thief was led to penitence and the prayer of faith.

So, at last, every sinner will feel, as he has never felt before, his own wickedness and folly. The revelation

of the Judge will impart to conscience new vitality and force. Ungodly deeds will be seen in all their hideousness, and dissonant echoes of old blasphemies will reawake in the halls of memory. This conviction produced by the First Advent gave occasion for repentance, but that produced by the Second will be the instrument of vengeance.

The Scriptures speak not only of a coming of God to men, but of men coming to God. It is the merciful intention of the one to bring about the other. All our religion takes its character from Divine revelation. If God reveals himself to us as our righteous Lord, loving Father, and self-sacrificing Redeemer, it is ours to yield us to Him in faith, gratitude and service. Placed as we are between His two advents, looking back on the one and forward to the other, let us come in obedience to the invitation of the First, and the invitation of the Second shall be ours also.—David Thomas.

REVELATION

The Two Bibles.

"What thou seest write in a book."
—Revelation 1:2.
"In their minds will I write them."
—Hebrews 10:16.

Here are two Bibles, two Divine Books. The first passage refers to God's writing through man upon paper or parchment; this constitutes the book which we commonly call the Bible. This Bible is a record on paper, of what the Eternal ages ago revealed to the writers; it is a record of Divine facts, appearances, ideas, purposes, &c., &c. The second passage refers to God's writing through the Bible by His Spirit on the human

soul, this for many reasons is the better Bible. •The other is good—transcendently good—but this is better. Christianity in human life is better than Christianity in cold ink. It is better. Why?

I. *Because It Contains the Divine Things, the Other Only Contains the Symbols.* Love, truth, rectitude, purity, holiness, are on the paper Bible only as signs, they themselves are not there. The figures on your bank-book representing the amount which stands to your credit at the bank is not the real money but the sign; your property is not in your book but in the bank. So Divine virtues are not in the letter press, they are only represented there. But in the Christly

life they themselves are breathing, operative, soul-fashioning forces. Why?

II. Because It Is the End of Culture, the Other Only the Means. When men get into them the true spiritual graces, the moral principles and temper of Christ, they have realised the end of Divine training, the Great Father has made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The paper Bible is the means to this, the necessary means, I believe, but nothing more. The means often exist where the end is not realised, and in this case they are a curse rather than a blessing, inasmuch as they deepen guilt and augment responsibility. Why?

III. Because It is Self-Obvious the Other Requires Explanation. A Christly life is a Bible that a child can read, that men of all tribes and languages can interpret. It does not require the attainment of any original or modern language, nor the knowledge of any hermeneutic rule, its meaning flashes on the heart at once. It is not a description of light, it is light. Not so with the paper Bible; it contains many things "hard to be understood." There is not a chapter, scarcely a verse, that has not some obscurity, and that does not start a point for controversy. Why?

IV. Because It Is Imperishable, the Other Is Temporary. The principles of truth, love and goodness that are written on the human soul are not only indestructible in themselves, but the substance on which they are written is indestructible, it is eternal life. But the paper Bible is perishable, time moulders it, and the last conflagration will burn it up.

Conclusion: Prize the paper Bible by all means, but don't superstitiously worship it. Greatly do I prize the letters of love which my parents addressed to me to counsel me in young life; but they do not contain love,

the love was in the writers' hearts, and far more do I prize their loving natures. Let us learn to prize the Christly life; it is greater than all literature; it contains the things of which the Bible is only the symbol, the eternal realities of which the Bible only gives the name. Merciful Heaven, multiply this Bible!—The Homilist.

Christ's Final Advent.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."—Revelations 1:7.

The high probability is, that this is a prophetic description of Christ as He came in His providence to the destruction of Jerusalem. Between His final advent and this, there are so many striking resemblances, that the description of the one is remarkably applicable to the other. Applying the words to the final advent, we have four facts concerning it.

I. Christ Will Come. Reason and conscience, as well as the Bible, teach this. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it. Job knew that He would stand again upon the earth. Christ and His apostles frequently and unequivocally taught it. (Luke 9:26).

II. His Coming Will Be Terribly Grand. "On the clouds of heaven." The grandest objects to mortal eyes are the heavens that encircle us. Their vast expanse and immeasurable height, all radiant with rolling orbs in boundless variety, seem to bear us into the awful depths of infinitude. Anything strange on the face of those heavens has always a power to strike terror in human souls. Christ is represented as coming on "the clouds." Daniel, in a vision, beheld

Him thus. (Daniel 7:13.) Christ Himself declared that thus He would come. (Matt. 24:30, and 26:64.) Angels have declared the same. (Acts 1:11.) John beheld Him on a "great white throne," so effulgent that the material universe melted away before it. How unlike the despised Galilean!

3. His Coming Will Be Universally Observed. "Every eye shall see him." It is an event in which all are interested. Men of all ages and lands, from Adam to "the last of woman-born," men of all social grades and mental types, are all vitally concerned in this stupendous event. Hence all shall see Him. First: All shall see Him immediately. Now we see Him representatively, by His words, and ordinances, and ministers. But then we shall see Him. Oh, to see Him! Secondly: Shall see Him fully. Not one shall have a partial view, a mere passing aspect, but a full, complete vision. His full person will fall complete on every eye-ball. Thirdly: Shall see Him impressively. The universe had never had such an impressive sight of Him before.

IV. His Coming Will Be Differently Regarded. First: To some it will be a scene of poignant distress. "They that pierced him, and all the kinreds of the earth, shall wail because of him." "They that look upon me whom they pierced." (Zech. 12:10.) What inexpressible and inconceivable anguish will the rejectors of Christ experience now? "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men," etc. (Rev. 6:15-17.) Secondly: To others it will be a scene welcomed with delight. "Even so, Amen." The good in all ages have said, "Come, Lord Jesus." To His true disciples it will be a period in which all difficulties will be explained, all imperfections removed, all evils ended for ever. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," etc.—The Homilist.

The Final Coming of Christ to Judgment.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kinreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."—Revelation 1:7.

I. Christ Will Come to Judgment.

1. The announcement of prophecy: Enoch, Job. Christ and His disciples were frequent in their reference to His final advent. They made it a motive for diligence, and incentive to watchfulness, and the occasion of other solemn instruction.
2. The statement of Scripture. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." "He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained."
3. The conviction of reason.
4. The dread expectation of conscience.

II. The Coming of Christ to Judgment Will Be Associated with Majesty and Glory. "He cometh with clouds." 1. The clouds are indicative of mystery. Clouds hide many things from mortal vision. So the coming of Christ will be associated with great mystery. There will be the mystery connected with a judge possessed of a nature at once human and Divine. There will be the mystery associated with the life and attendance of angelic spirits. There will be the mystery consequent upon the resurrection and trial of humanity. 2. The clouds are indicative of beauty. We have all seen and admired them. So the great coming of Christ will be associated with everything that constitutes moral grandeur. The scene will be one of supreme rectitude, of infinite purity, and, therefore, unrivalled glory. 3. The clouds are indicative of power. With what force do the clouds rush along the heavens;

who or what could resist them in their rapid march? So the final coming of Christ to Judgment will be irresistible.

III. The Coming of Christ to Judgment Will Be Witnessed by an Assembled Universe. "And every eye shall see him." 1. He will be seen by the devout Christian. By men who have consecrated their lives to His service. These will be in sympathy with His coming. 2. He will be seen by the impious sceptic. Hobbs and Hume will see Him. These will behold His coming with surprise. 3. He will be seen by the morally impenitent. Herod, Judas, Pilate; sinner, you will see Him. These will see Him with dismay. Hypocrite and backslider, you will see Him. You will see Him with despair.

IV. The Coming of Christ to Judgment Meets with the Solemn Approbation of the Good. "Even so, Amen." 1. They approve, not because they desire the final overthrow of the wicked. The good man's desire is that the whole world should be saved. 2. They approve, because it is the legitimate termination of mortal affairs. 3. They approve, because it will lead them into a bright and more durable vision of the eternal. *Lessons:*—1. The world will one day see Christ. 2. Will you "wail because of him," or say, "Even so, Amen"?—J. S. Exell.

The Necessity of Immediate Repentance.

"*Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly.*"—Revelation 2:16.

I. What That Repentance Is That Is Here Enjoined. Repentance in Scripture has a threefold acceptation.

1. It is taken for the first act by which the soul turns from sin to God;

the first dividing stroke that separates sin and the heart; the first step and advance that a sinner makes to holiness; the first endeavours and throes of a new birth.

2. It is taken for the whole course of a pious life, comprising the whole actions a man performs from first to last inclusively; from his first turning from a wicked life to the last period of a godly.

3. Repentance is taken for a man's turning to God after the guilt of some particular sin. It differs from the former thus: that the former is from a state of sin, this latter only from a sinful act. No repentance precedes the former, but this supposes a true repentance to have gone before. This repentance, therefore, builds upon the former; and it is that which is here intended.

II. Arguments To Engage Us in the Speedy and Immediate Exercise of This Duty.

1. No man can be secure of the future. Neither, indeed, will men act as if they were in things that concern this life, for no man willingly defers his pleasures. And did men here well compute the many frailties of nature, and further add the contingencies of chance, how quickly a disease from within or a blow from without may tear down the strongest constitution, certainly they would ensure eternity upon something else than a life as uncertain as the air that feeds it.

2. Supposing the allowance of time, yet we cannot be sure of power to repent. It is very possible, that by the insensible encroaches of sin a man's heart may be so hardened as to have neither power nor will to repent, though he has time and opportunity. The longer the heart and sin converse together, the more familiar they will grow; and then, the stronger the familiarity, the harder the separation. A man at first is strong and his sin is weak, and he may easily break

the neck of it by a mature repentance; but his own deluding heart tells him that he had better repent hereafter; that is, when, on the contrary, he himself is deplorably weak and his sin invincibly strong.

3. Admitting a man has both time and grace to repent, yet by such delay the work will be incredibly more difficult. The longer a debt lies unpaid, the greater it grows; and not discharged, is quickly multiplied. The sin to be repented of will be the greater, and power and strength to repent by will be less. And though a man escapes death, the utmost effect of his distemper, yet certainly he will find it something to be cut and sacrificed and lanced and to endure all the tortures of a deferred cure. We find not such fierce expressions of vengeance against any sinner, as the Spirit of God, in Deut. 29:20, 21, discharges against him that obstinately delayed his repentance. (1) Because it is the abuse of a remedy. Certainly it cannot but be the highest provocation to see guilt kick at mercy, and presumption take advantage merely from a redundancy of compassion. He that will fight it out, and not surrender, only because he has articles of peace offered to him, deserves to feel the sword of an unmerciful enemy. (2) The reason why God is exasperated by our delaying this duty is, because it clearly shows that a man does not love it, as a duty, but only intends to use it for an expedient of escape. It is not because it is pleasing to God, grateful to an offended majesty, or because he apprehends a worth and excellency in the thing itself; for then he would set about it immediately: for love is quick and active, and desire hates all delay. (3) A third reason that God's displeasure so implacably burns against this sin is, because it is evidently a counterplotting of God, and being wise above the prescribed meth-

ods of salvation, to which God makes the immediate dereliction of sin necessary. But he that defers his repentance makes this his principle, to live a sinner and die a penitent.—R. South.

A Timely Period.

"And I gave her space to repent."
—Revelation 2:21.

God is the great giver; He gives life and food and happiness to all His creatures. He gave to man an erect body and a noble soul. Strange that man should want the gift spoken of in the text; stranger still that God should so wonderfully bestow it. We have in the words—

I. *A Definition of Time.* Some call time the measure of duration; others the succession of ideas, pearls strung upon a golden thread. But is not this as good as either: "space to repent?" Man is here, not to found a family, not to make a fortune, not to live a long life, but "to repent."

II. *A Limitation of Mercy.* "Space," a definite period of time. Man's "days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." (Job 15:5.) "He limiteth a certain day," the opportunities to receive gracious visitations are compressed within the lifetime of a day! "The Holy Ghost saith, to-day." Exhort while it is called to-day. First: How rash the calculations of the sinner. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." Secondly: How simple the reckoning of the saint. "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." "All the days of my appointed time," etc. "Brethren, the time is short."

III. *A Declaration of Duty.* "Repent." It must be "Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord

Jesus Christ." "Repentance is the earthly side of faith, faith the heavenly side of repentance"; or "Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith." We ask not for the garments and manners of repentance; these the hypocrites can furnish; we want the thing: change of will, of purpose, of object. Oh, sinner, have you not had opportunities, encouragement, instruction, warning? The dark gulf that rolls onward to hell is not without beacon or buoy, or lightship; the coastline, quicksand, the rocks, the maelstrom, are flooded with Gospel light; and he who in our day will push on and despise the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God, will realise in fact the closing words of Bunyan's immortal pilgrim, "Then I saw that there was a way to hell even from the gates of heaven."

IV. A Foreshadowing of Destiny. "I gave her space to repent, and she repented not. Behold," etc. How is it that man can foresee his destiny? Because he can pursue a syllogism to its conclusion. In eternity there are two places of abode; a palace and a prison. The path leading to these is on earth, the fitness for these is accomplished in time. The birth-chastening, meetening, adorning for heaven, is done here; and evil deeds and wilful darkness done and loved on earth, will most certainly fit a man for hell. Man is related to eternity. His memory is related to the book of God's remembrance; his conscience to the verdict which shall come from the great white throne! They will ever tally and agree. The time for the sinner to stop, to think, to turn, is Now, for the stream of time runs to the ocean of eternity; this limited period shall melt into the illimitable, this finite into the infinite. Then, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still!" (Rev. 22: 11.)

—H. T. M.

The Unconverted Sinner's Estimate of Himself.

"*I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*"—Revelation 3: 17.

I. The Unconverted Sinner's Estimate of His Own Condition. 1. "*I am rich.*" The word "rich" is here used in its most extended meaning, as descriptive of the possession of that which is of great value. "*I am rich.*" I possess much; and what I possess is well worth having. If the unconverted sinner has money, he is proud of it. He looks upon it as a great portion. But many of the unconverted have no money to be proud of. That circumstance, however, does not prevent them from finding out that they are rich. Perhaps they have respectable family connections, or they have a goodly personal appearance, or they possess superior talents. In any such case, the mind fastens with special complacency upon the circumstance, and feels all the satisfaction attendant upon the consciousness of being rich. 2. "*And increased with goods.*" These words embody an additional conceit of the unconverted man. He is rich, and his wealth is not in the course of decay; on the contrary; it is rising in its amount, it is accumulating fast. If he is a young man, he, peradventure, rejoices in the rapid growth and extensive range of his literary and scientific and professional acquirements, and his heart bounds within him as the strong hope arises of approaching distinction and fame. See, again, that man who has left behind him the gay period of youth, and has arrived at the years of maturity and wisdom. He is no longer what he once was. The fire of passion is moderated, and the grosser immoralities of early life are abandoned. From being a person of no character, he is become a person of good character. He is pru-

dent, a well behaved, an honourable citizen. 3. "And have need of nothing." In these words we are presented with the unconverted man's climax. The prosperity of his state has arrived at the superlative degree.

II. The Unconverted Sinner's Real State. 1. "He is wretched." Consider the original state of mankind. Think of its enjoyments, its privileges, its honours, its prospects. What a happy condition! and how wretched the condition which has succeeded! They might be free, but instead of that they are slaves to Satan, to the world, to their own lusts. They might be noble princes; but, alas! they are disgraced outcasts from the Divine favour. They might be kings and priests unto God; but they are doomed criminals, the branded victims of coming vengeance. Surely they are in a wretched condition; they have the Almighty Potentate of heaven and earth for their foe. 2. "Miserable." It is intimated here, that when the mind comes to the consideration of the state of the unconverted, the appropriate emotion is pity. The thraldom they are held in calls for pity; the forfeiture they have incurred, the doom they have provoked, the self-deception they are practising, the false security they are indulging, the infatuation they are exemplifying, demand our pity. 3. "Poor." If the tattered garment around the body be recognised as the symbol of poverty surely we have the symbol of a deeper poverty when the soul is enveloped in the unclean rags of self-righteousness! 4. "Blind." Sinai overhangs him, but he heeds not the frowning mountain. One fairer than the sons of men, and chief among ten thousand, appears to him; but he evinces no sense of His attractions. The deformities of sin do not hinder him from embracing it. Though it be the noon-day of the Gospel, he gropes as one in darkness.

The road which he travels is marked for his warning, as the way to everlasting misery and ruin, but he slackens not his pace. Can it be, then, that he sees? Would beauty have no power to draw a man, deformity none to repel him, or dangers to dismay him, unless he were blind? 5. "Naked." This completes the picture of an unconverted state. The unconverted are naked in a twofold respect—in that they want the garment of justification, and likewise the garment of sanctification.

III. Some Inferences Descriptive of the Unconverted Man's Error. 1. It is a great error. It is just as great an error as possibly can be. It is not, for example, the error of the man who says it is an hour before noon, or an hour after noon, when it is actually just noon; but it is the error of him who declares it is midnight while he stands under the blaze of the meridian sun. 2. It is a surprising error. It is surprising from its very grossness. Man is so prone to err that the occurrence of small mistakes excites no astonishment; on the contrary, we look for it. But it is startling to find men calling bitter sweet, emptiness abundance, disgrace honour, and misery comfort and happiness. The error in question is the more extraordinary, when it is considered that there are such ample means of getting at the truth. 3. It is a pernicious error. Death is the consequence of adhering to this error—death in its most appalling form—the eternal ruin of body and soul. 4. It is an error which, by human means, is incorrigible. We say not that its correction is beyond the power of God.—A. Gray.

The Christian's Death.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."—Revelation 14: 13.

I. *Death Is a Curse.* My text, no doubt, says, "Blessed are the dead," still death is a curse. The lower creatures die, but with how little pain! in what happy ignorance! Death springs on them with a tiger's leap. The coming event casts no shadow before. I have seen a lamb go gamboling on its way to the slaughterhouse cropping the wayside flowers. The bravest men are afraid of death; and true bravery lies not in insensibility to its terrors, but in facing what we fear. It is an easy thing for a soldier, amid the whirl and excitement of a battle-field, to dash on the serried bayonets; but show me the man, unless a true, lofty, strong-minded Christian, who will, calmly and undauntedly, meet his dying hour. Ah! this fate, from which nature shrinks with instinctive horror, tries the courage of the bravest, and the piety of the best of men. Separate and apart from the consolations of Christian faith, death is a tremendous evil. Nature shrinks from it, shuddering. I do not like to think of being a cold, pale, inanimate form of clay, unconscious of the love and grief of all around me; screwed down into a narrow coffin. Nor is that all; the grave is the land of oblivion; and who does not shrink from the thought of being forgotten? Besides these sad imaginings, the sufferings that usually attend the close of life and gather like heavy clouds around its settling sun, make death a curse.

II. *Death Is a Blessing.* How true these words—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" A union that, more intimate than the connection between body and soul which a slight accident may endanger, which an ounce of lead, an inch of steel, a drop of poison, a wrong step, the hand of a child may dissolve; a union that, more intimate than binds together those sections of the Church which, though differing, co-operate. The union which is formed between

Christ and His people being one of incorporation, and not one merely of co-operation, what the one is, the other is; and where the one is, the other is; and as the one feels, the other feels; and as our bodies and their limbs have blood in common, or the branches and trunk of a tree have sap in common, so Jesus and His people have all things in common. To be in Christ, therefore, to be in the Lord, implies that we shall infallibly enjoy all the blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which He shed His blood to purchase; these being secured to us by the great oath of God, and the bonds of a covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. With Christ we shall be crowned, and throned in glory. Well then may the apostle say, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord"! They must be blessed. How can it be otherwise? "Die!" No doubt they must die; but death has lost its sting; and it does not matter when, or how, or where they die. Think of it, therefore, not as death, but as glory—going to heaven, and to your Father. It is life through Christ, and life in Christ; life most blissful, and life evermore.

III. *Death Is a Blessing as Introducing Us Into a State of Rest.* 1. At death the believer rests from the toils of life. 2. At death the believer rests from the cares of life. Next to sin, these form life's heaviest burden. There will be nothing in the household above to withdraw Martha from sitting with her sister at Jesus' feet—there Jacob mourns no Joseph, and David weeps no Absalom; the pious widow dreads no empty barrel; Lazarus fears no rich man's frown, nor courts his favour. 3. At death the believer rests from the griefs of life.—T. Guthrie.

The Swift and Sudden Event.

"Behold, I come as a thief."—Revelation 16:15.

These are words specially for the last days. With eighteen hundred years behind us now, we may take them home most solemnly to ourselves. 1. They warn. 2. They quicken. 3. They rouse. 4. They comfort.

I. *The Coming.* It is the long-promised advent. Christ comes! He comes—1. As Avenger. 2. As Judge. 3. As King. 4. As Bridegroom. Like lightning; like a thief; like a snare. Like lightning to the world, but the Sun of morning to His Church; like a thief to the world, but like a Bridegroom to the Church; like a snare to the world, but like the cloud of glory to His own.

II. *The Watching.* Not believing nor hoping, nor waiting merely; but watching—as men do against some event, whether terrible or joyful, of which they know not the time. Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour of His arrival. Watch, for that day is great and glorious. Watch, for ye are naturally disposed to sit down and take your ease. Watch, for Satan tries to lull you asleep. Watch, for the world, with its riches and vanities and pleasures, is trying to throw you off your guard.

III. *The Keeping of the Garments.* Be like Nehemiah, who, when watching against the Ammonites, did not put off his clothes night nor day. Keep your garments all about you, that when the Lord comes He may find you not naked, but robed and ready.

IV. *The Blessedness.* Blessed is the watcher; blessed is the keeper of his garments. Many are the blessed ones; here is one class specially for the last days. 1. It is blessed, for it cherishes our love. 2. It is blessed, for it is the posture through which

He has appointed blessing to come, in His absence, to His waiting Church.

V. *The Warning.* Lest ye walk naked, and men see your shame. "Shame" has three meanings. 1. The shameful thing or object. 2. The feeling of shame produced by the consciousness of the shameful thing. 3. The exposure to shame, and scorn from others. The first of these is specially referred to here. But all the three are connected.—H. Bonar.

The Revivals of Memory a Prophecy of Judgment.

"And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."—Revelation 20:12.

I. *A Perfect Memory Then Will Accompany Judgment.* The fields of memory at some magic touch give back again all the lights and shadows which have ever swept across their surface. The children of memory rise again from their graves, and wander in without warning into the once familiar rooms which they have long ceased to visit. The canvas of memory is retouched by some artist whose skill restores the tints which had faded away. The colours of memory are like those in Egyptian halls, long concealed by sand, but fresh as if they had just come from the painter's hand when the drifted heaps are blown away. Is there absolute oblivion? What destroys memory and effaces her work finally? Not the loss of sense—the deaf musician still possesses the strain which the outward ear has not heard for years. Not old age—the old man's memory is the one thing more touching than his forgetfulness. Not madness, or the fever which for a time seems to calcine the images of the mind. Memories retain in very different degrees, like the sand, like the freestone, or

the marble; but all are gifted with this possibility of resurrection.

II. With a full perception of the reality of judgment accompanied with a revived memory we shall most profitably enter upon a *Consideration of the Danger of Evil Thoughts*. Let us suggest some simple rules of self-examination. 1. We should then, really examine ourselves, if possible every day, with this prayer, "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts." We should ask ourselves two questions every night. First, have I led any into sin this day?—We sin together—can we repent together? Second, have I harboured willingly and knowingly any evil thoughts? Have I allowed the birds of evil omen to settle down upon the sacrifice, and failed to sanctify Christ as Lord in my heart? In the dreadful chronology of sin, the actual fall is often not the first or the hundredth sin. 2. I now suggest some simple rules. When unholy thoughts come, pray quickly—"Spirit of evil!

in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, depart." "Blessed Spirit of purity! quench this sinful thought." After falling into sin, pray—"God, be merciful to me a sinner! For the sake of Jesus Christ, lay not this sin to my charge." Occupy yourselves with business. Go into virtuous society. Do not go about visibly brooding. Take freely to wholesome literature and innocent recreations.

III. Enough, perhaps, of details. *A Word of Motives.* 1. A great commentator on Scripture advises us, if we are tempted to unholy thoughts, to look through our window. "Gaze," he says, "upon the serenity of the sky, and be possessed with a loathing of impurity." But what if we have lost the faculty for such a sight? What if we are colour-blind to all the blue of heaven? Seek for a purer joy. 2. Dwell upon the reality of judgment. Without this you will be liable to strange falls. You will be like sailors who are lost because they have not calculated for the "send" of the sea.—Abp. Wm. Alexander.



